

MALAWI COUNTRY STRATEGY 2016-2020

STRATEGIC EVALUATION

**Evaluation and Audit Unit
September 2021**

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Abbreviations

AfDB	African Development Bank
CIP	International Potato Centre
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DAI	Development Alternatives International
DCAD	Development Cooperation and Africa Division
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DNHA	Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Development Agency)
GNI	Gross National Income
GoM	Government of Malawi
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INIS	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service
IRLI	Irish Rule of Law International
LUANAR	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MT	Metric tonne
MVAC	Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee
NASFAM	National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRIS	National Registration and Identification System
NSSP	National Social Support Programme
ODA	Official Development Assistance

OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFSP	Orange Fleshed Sweet Potatoes
PMF	Performance Management Framework
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSEAH	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harm
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
REKL	Research, Evidence, Knowledge Management and Learning
SCI	Save the Children International
SCT	Social Cash Transfer
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UP	United Purpose
VSL	Village Savings and Loans
WFP	World Food Programme
WoE	Whole of Embassy
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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Evaluation team

The Evaluation and Audit Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland is an independent unit that reports directly to the Secretary General. Their work is overseen by an independent Audit Committee. This evaluation was undertaken by the Evaluation and Audit Unit and a consultancy firm, Additional Research. The report is the product of the authors, and responsibility for the accuracy of the data included in this report rests with the authors. The findings, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations presented in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or views of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The 2016-2020 Malawi Country Strategy Paper (CSP) sets out Ireland's approach to its bilateral relationship with Malawi. The Embassy sought to implement Irish foreign policy and increase the resilience of poor households to economic, social and environmental shocks in line with Malawi's Growth and Development Strategy. Total programme expenditure was **€73.2 million** (excluding administration) between 2016 and 2020, implemented through a mixture of grants to government, non-government organisations and civil society. The executive summary captures key findings, results (see infographic below), conclusions and recommendations.

PURPOSE

This report is an independent, evidenced-based evaluation of the performance of the Embassy's CSP 2016-2020 under the criteria of effectiveness across the five outcome areas in the strategy. The evaluation was commissioned to inform the design of the new mission strategy (2021-2025), contribute to organisational learning and serve as a mechanism of accountability. A mixed-methods approach was applied that included a review of documentation, interviews, focus groups and a field visit in November 2019.

NAVIGATING A DIFFICULT CONTEXT

Overall, the Embassy made important contributions across a range of areas in a challenging operating context. The Embassy was politically astute, technically capable, flexible, and leveraged all aspects of the work of the mission to deliver a strategy that was relevant and responsive to the needs and development priorities of Malawi. The Embassy's proficient development programme and politically engaged Embassy-wide activities were cohesive and mutually reinforcing. The success of the delivery of the Embassy's overall strategy however, was tempered by the wider context. The nebulous fiduciary, institutional and regulatory environment is likely to remain challenging for development effectiveness, human rights, trade and investment. The following are the main conclusions.

RELATIONSHIPS AND COOPERATION

The CSP was endorsed by the Government of Malawi in 2016. The Embassy had strong, collaborative political and development cooperation relationships with the EU and peer ministries. It used its diplomatic leverage to engage effectively in key policy issues, defend fundamental rights, and help promote gender equality, climate action and other international norms, thus also furthering Ireland's reputation and global interests. The Embassy engaged effectively with Irish emigrants and the diaspora, as well as promoting Irish culture, arts and creative industries through Embassy events. Nevertheless, the evaluation identified opportunities for strengthening public diplomacy and visibility, including further promotion of Ireland through digital forums in line with the development of its communications plan.

IMPLEMENTING AN AMBITIOUS STRATEGY

Innovation, research and effectiveness: The Embassy's approach to research, evidence and learning on a number of initiatives resulted in residual outcomes beyond the lifetime of the CSP. Building on longevity in the area, the Embassy's piloting, development and implementation of a flexible, shock-responsive electronic cash transfer programme resulted in improvements in efficiency of social support for poor and vulnerable households that informed policy and practice. It demonstrated improved systemic efficiencies that reached the most vulnerable rapidly during humanitarian crises such as flooding, drought and the annual lean season. Similarly, the Embassy's contribution to the UNDP's National Registration and Identification System was influential, achieving almost universal coverage of national ID cards. While some of the micro-research projects produced mixed results, the Embassy might capitalise on its comparative advantage and seek opportunities for localised innovative solutions by funding approaches or research led by Malawian or regional academic thought leaders, in partnership with Irish higher education institutions.

Development programming- delivering on Our Values: The Embassy built on the positive legacy of past strategies and in-country presence achieving important developmental outcomes throughout the course of the CSP. With modest resources, it reinforced good practice and accountability by funding interventions that strengthened the resilience of poor households to economic, social and environmental shocks in line with Malawi's growth and development strategy. The Embassy promoted the resilience of Malawi's people by working to improve sustainable livelihoods, develop climate-smart seed systems, improve nutrition, access to justice, governance and participation in democratic institutions (see infographic below). Overall, the CSP was focused on strategically curated partnerships delivered through a range of modalities that targeted the poorest and most vulnerable households. Cross-sectoral synergies were evident between agriculture, nutrition, climate and governance. Several of the sectors the Embassy operates in were highly politicised and the Embassy navigated challenges as well as possible within the constraints of the environment. The Embassy team carefully managed the balance of breadth of programming and associated risks that could undermine the developmental effectiveness of the CSP though it spread itself thinly in some places. While some interventions achieved better success than others, the Embassy nevertheless made contributions beyond the financial grants alone. However, despite overall progress, the development needs of Malawians are significant and there remains a policy to implementation lag nationally.

DEFINING AND MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Attribution and capturing results: A significant amount of valuable work was carried out by the Embassy that added value to the entire strategy, reinforcing its development programming. However, although a difficult challenge, there would have been further demonstrable success if the Embassy could have better articulated this added value and incorporated associated results into measuring performance. Partner monitoring and evaluation outputs were of mixed quality and the facilitation of capacity building in this area might be considered and monitored. While partner performance should still be collated and monitored, there may have been alternative ways of assessing overall mission performance that could, for example, be separate to partner performance. The post of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) advisor was reported to have added value in tracking partner performance and overall reporting. In order to implement and embed effective monitoring, evaluation and learning, and value for money, the Embassy might consider continuing the post of M&E specialist or availing of external expertise.

ALIGNING IRISH FOREIGN POLICY

Gender equality and women's empowerment: The CSP was broadly coherent with international human rights standards and international and regional normative frameworks endorsed by the Malawian Government. The Embassy had strengths in advocacy and targeting across programming in line with gender as a cross-cutting priority in its CSP. Moving forward, the Embassy could take the opportunity presented by the new mission strategy and *A Better World* to research and embed gender and women's empowerment more centrally by focusing on transformational programming and consultative partnership approaches. Consideration should also be given to strengthening areas it already works in and or supporting research, testing and piloting interventions that would have positive uptake, such as women's financial empowerment, women and girls' leadership, eliminating gender-based violence and child marriage or girls' education.

Climate: Climate change and the environment were integrated as cross cutting issues throughout programming, with several synergies evident. The work on energy solutions for the poor, reforestation and mitigating deforestation are likely to pay dividends in the future. Given Malawi's vulnerability to climate shocks, there is no shortage of promising approaches the Embassy could consider. Rather than spreading itself too thin, it could consider small, agile projects that link prosperity with climate, such as green transition or affordable tech-based innovative solutions or job growth sectors. The Climate Unit within the DCAD, once established, might assist in supporting a balanced orientation for the Embassy moving forward.

Prosperity: The Embassy supported people-to-people connections and institutional development that promoted mutual interests. It adopted a limited but realistic approach to developing trade and economic links between Ireland and Malawi. There may be some scope to extend this even further, such as stronger promotion of international education, innovative economic engagement, corporate social responsibility and deepening research linkages in the *Ireland's Strategy for Africa to 2025, A Better World* and *Irish Educated, Globally Connected*.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGING RISK

Effective management, oversight of funding and good decision-making on key strategic issues was evident despite staffing constraints at times both in headquarters and at mission level. A combination of good management systems, communication, realistic objective-setting and a sharp focus on the Standard Approach to Grant Management helped to mitigate risk. The Embassy's emphasis on off-budget programming as a funding modality was well placed although it was cognisant of the balance in shifting resources from off-budget to on-budget programming in order to support the Government of Malawi's ability to engage in comprehensive planning and financial management. The Embassy might continue with this approach if or when it can be ensured that adequate fiduciary safeguards are in place to work with Government systems more directly.

RESOURCING

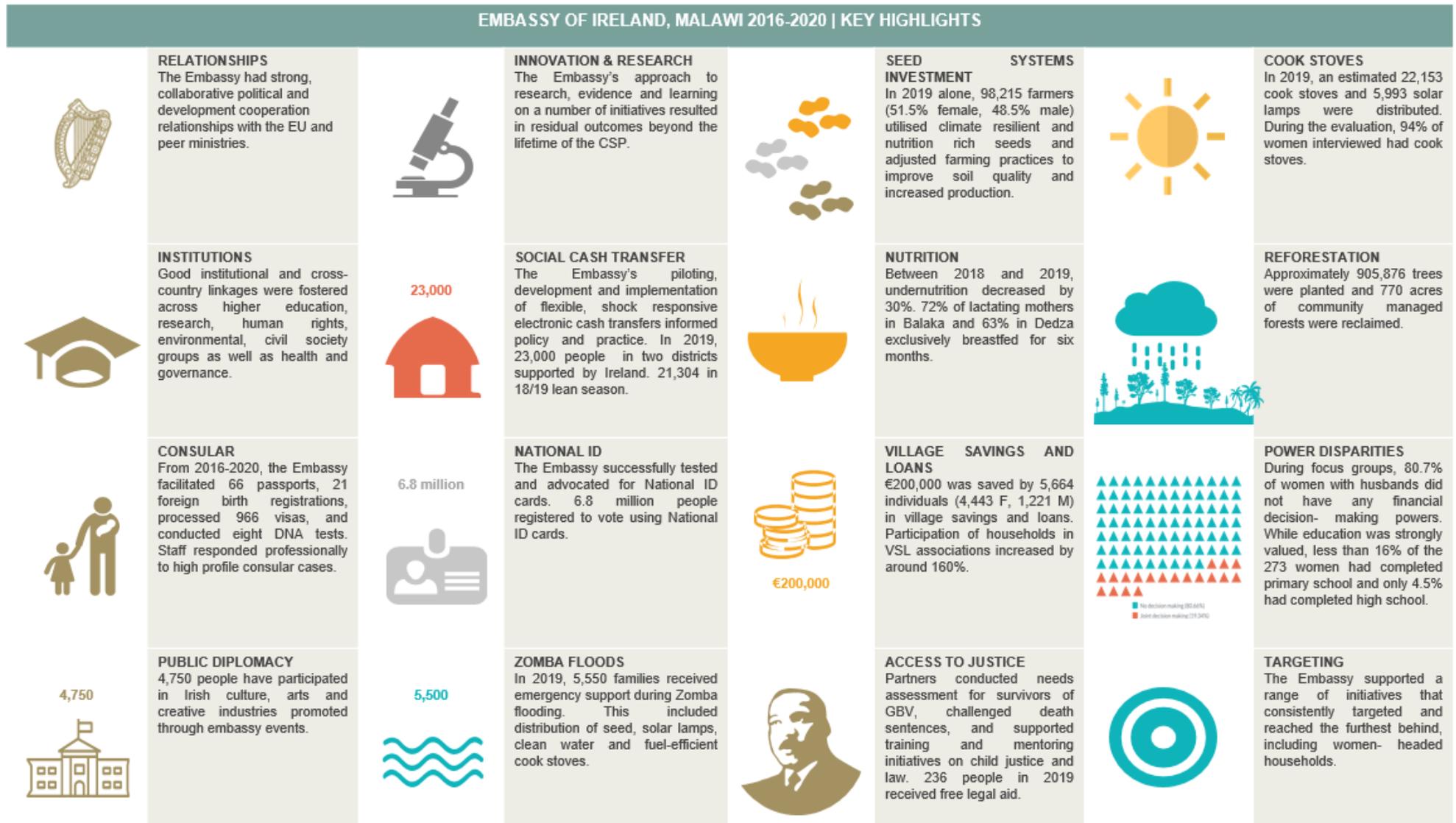
The Embassy is a large office and implementing the CSP calls for operational systems, management resources and staffing levels that are commensurate with the ambition of the strategy. Though partner numbers have reduced over the course of the CSP, resources are stretched to the limit. Approaches, activities and resourcing at HQ level such as turnover of staff and high transaction costs associated with overlapping requests that might be streamlined, impacted on the ability of the Embassy to implement its strategy effectively. The new mission strategy should therefore be developed jointly with a review of HR and other

needs. Professionally sourced knowledge management systems that are nimble, useful, effective and industry tested will vastly assist in efficiency and rapidly inform data driven programming.

SUMMARY

In summary, the Embassy is well-placed to continue adapting to the context, balance trade-offs, match its resources to outputs and orient itself towards a politically informed future. Taking on board the recommendations from this report and continuing its agile approach, the Embassy should be in a position to pivot towards *A Better World* and *Ireland's Strategy for Africa to 2025* (Gol, 2019) so long as it is sufficiently resourced at all times, supported by HQ and staffing gaps filled promptly.

Figure 1 Embassy of Ireland, Malawi Key Highlights 2016-2020



Recommendations

- 1. Relationships and cooperation:** The Embassy should continue its strong cooperation and relationships approach that capitalises on its political, technical and public diplomacy strengths that reinforces all aspects of its work. The Embassy may wish to consider further growing its public diplomacy efforts, through digital fora supported by the implementation of the draft communications strategy/plan, innovative digital approaches, high quality digital imaging and contextually relevant content. This may dovetail with the continuation of meaningful engagement with Irish emigrants and the diaspora, as well as the promotion of Irish culture, arts and creative industries. (Owner: Embassy).
- 2. Research, evidence, knowledge and learning:** The Embassy should continue with its strong record of accomplishment and reputation for innovative pilots and transformative research that aims to have systemic influence at policy and/or programme delivery levels. The team may wish to consider continuing to strengthen Irish-Malawian institutional research linkages and consolidating some of the more localised smaller research projects through this type of mechanism. (Owner: Embassy/Policy Unit DCAD).
- 3. Development programming:** The Embassy should continue its strategy of astute partner selection and mix of modalities and synergies across Embassy-supported interventions, such as agriculture and nutrition. The team may wish to review governance programming and continue with opportunities that generate synergy across interventions in line with Malawian policy priorities. Acknowledging that the humanitarian sector was politicised and complex, the Embassy might continue with its work on reducing humanitarian need through strengthening prevention and preparedness, and improving coordination among relevant agencies where feasible to do so. (Owner: Embassy).
- 4. Defining and measuring performance:** The Embassy should continue monitoring and utilising a strengthened performance management framework (PMF) and dedicated expertise that incorporates the breadth of its work and achievements. This could allow for pragmatic indicators and benchmarks appropriate to context and include all attributable aspects of the work and policy priorities such as gender and climate. The team may also consider approaches to strengthen partner capacity where relevant on M&E. (Owner: Embassy/Business Support Unit-DCAD).
- 5. Gender and transformational programming:** The Embassy might reflect on the implementation considerations outlined in section 6.1 and include these approaches as feasible. Moving forward, internal ways of working and interventions should promote gender responsive programming that directly advances gender equality and transformational change, whilst ensuring institutional capacity and access to such resources. (Owner: Embassy/DCAD Policy Unit).
- 6. Climate action:** The Embassy should build on its current synergies in climate and consider approaches that will strengthen climate action as a policy priority. The team might consider

experts on a draw down basis to advise on elevating climate action in a feasible and contextually appropriate way. (Owner: Embassy, DCAD Climate Unit).

7. **Prosperity:** The Embassy may wish to articulate and consider more proactive but contextually relevant approaches to fostering economic development, mutual prosperity, people-to-people connections and international education in line with Irish foreign policies such as *Global Ireland*, the *Africa Strategy* and *Irish Educated, Globally Connected*. (Owner: Embassy/DCAD).
8. **Governance and managing risk:** The Embassy should maintain a healthy risk appetite, continue to assess and calculate risk in its projects, and take the opportunity to make strategic contributions where appropriate. (Owner: Embassy).
9. **Resourcing:** The Embassy might review the relationship between its breadth of activity and balance its resources, including staffing structure, roles and competencies, operational needs extending to the physical space, office IT systems, and knowledge management systems. (Owner: Embassy/DCAD, HR).

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Through its Embassy in Lilongwe, Ireland has been committed to effectively addressing poverty and inequality in Malawi since 2007. It has invested in results over the long term, with many of the positive results attributable to the focus and sustained support of previous strategies and to investments in research and piloting.

The overall goal of its development programme is to increase the resilience of poor households to economic, social and environmental shocks, in line with Malawi's Growth and Development Strategy III (Government of Malawi 2017). The Embassy has overseen a total budget of **€73.2 million** (excluding administration) between 2016 and 2020. It has supported meaningful development initiatives in partnership with the Government of Malawi, multilateral organisations and diverse NGOs.

Table 1 Annual expenditure 2016-2020

Description	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Programme total*	€13,710,375	€13,599,017	€14,859,389	€15,520,540	€15,543,000	€73,232,321

*Excluding administrative expenditure

1.2 Purpose of the evaluation

This evaluation complements planning and reviews undertaken by the Embassy to inform how it may better position its approach to transformative change in Malawi, in line with Ireland's policy for international development, *A Better World*. The purposes of the evaluation as outlined in the terms of reference are to:

- Provide DFA management with an independent, evidenced-based assessment of the performance of the Embassy's CSP 2016-2020 under the criteria of effectiveness across its five outcome areas;
- Provide the Embassy country team and relevant DCAD units with an evaluation that can be used to inform the upcoming planning exercise to develop a new mission strategy;
- Contribute to the pool of evidence for the delivery of mission results from 2016-2019 by applying evaluation as a mechanism of accountability;
- Contribute to whole of Department organisational learning.

1.3 Scope

The evaluation covered the period of the CSP from 2016 to January 2020¹. Guided by the OECD Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance and Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, the evaluation examined the performance of the Malawi CSP 2016-2020. The DAC evaluation criteria of effectiveness was selected for this evaluation.

¹ Where data is available beyond January 2020, the most recent is cited.

In addition, gender equality and climate action² were embedded as cross-cutting themes within the evaluation.

While the evaluation could not and did not assess the performance of the CSP against *A Better World* (Government of Ireland 2019a), nevertheless the policy was considered in the context of any forward-facing lessons and recommendations. The evaluation covers the period up to January 2020, before the onset of the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. The findings and implications of this for future programming was not directly addressed by this report.

1.4 Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was applied to evaluate the effectiveness of the Country Strategy Paper. A representative sample of key/strategic projects and approaches across the outcome areas was included. In consultation with the reference group, Africa Unit and the Embassy, the following methodological approaches were undertaken:

- A review of 293 key documents;
- 74 semi-structured interviews³;
- 18 focus groups with partners, key stakeholders and 500 community members; including women only groups with 273 participants;
- Site visits to communities and partner offices;
- Financial and portfolio analysis.

The methodological approach aimed to triangulate evidence through a series of sources. The purpose of the interviews and field visits was to cross-check the evidence arising from the initial analyses and gather further evidence from interviews with key stakeholders including the Embassy of Ireland in Malawi, project partners, the Government of Malawi, and other stakeholders including community members. Early stage feedback was sought through an in-field workshop with the Embassy staff for discussion of early findings and recommendations in November 2019. Further inputs occurred through written consultation⁴ with the Evaluation Reference Group and key DFA stakeholders on the substance of the report as well as findings and recommendations.

1.5 Limitations

As with all evaluations, the evaluation of the CSP encountered some limitations. These included:

- **Timing of the evaluation:** The evaluation field visit was undertaken in November 2019, more than one year before the completion of the CSP. The data that informed partner reporting was largely collected before September 2019. Hence, drawing conclusions about overall performance is reflective of a cross sectional period of time. Many important results were yet to be captured throughout 2020. Likewise, the evaluation took place several months before COVID-19 unfolded. As such, there was likely to be a compounding effect that was not taken into account in this report, as all data preceded COVID-19.

² Climate action includes references to 'environment' in the CSP

³ 74 semi-structured interviews were conducted with approximately 234 individuals.

⁴ Due to COVID-19, the workshop for the development of recommendations based on the draft report (with Evaluation Reference Group and key DFA stakeholders) was cancelled and written feedback was sought in lieu.

- **Attribution:** The nature of development assistance and difficulties around certain aspects of assessment means that it was difficult to attribute improvements or changes directly to assistance provided by Ireland and its partners. Moreover, Ireland contributed funds to some organisations alongside a number of other donors. Apportionment of results and programme success to Ireland's funding was challenging. Nevertheless, the evaluation endeavoured to draw direct linkages where it was possible to do so.
- **Site visit representativeness:** The evaluation team carried out site visits to observe project implementation and carry out key informant interviews with project management staff and community members. While these were considered essential for the purposes of triangulation and to provide valuable insights into the nature of programming on the ground, they do not necessarily represent the entire spectrum of programme implementation. Therefore, the results from these sites cannot be extrapolated across the entire CSP.
- The Performance Management Framework (PMF) was one source of information and data was used to inform the overall assessment of the 'Our Values' section of the strategy. However, there are limitations with the PMF and therefore other sources of information were also used to triangulate findings.

Other standard limitations included variation in the quality of reports and documentation, for example, decentralised evaluations. This reflects the possibility that reports and results documents may only partially capture the reality of results. Natural bias may affect interviews and focus groups (e.g. confirmation bias, recall bias, social desirability bias, compliance, interviewer bias), in particular when donors and partners were present during interviews and focus group discussions.

2. Country context

Malawi, a landlocked economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, is one of the world's poorest countries with a per capita GNI of just US\$360, and US\$1,310 on a purchasing power parity basis (World Bank, 2018e). Poverty levels, driven by low productivity in the agriculture sector, limited opportunities in non-farm activities, volatile economic growth and rapid population growth, are highest in the south (63%) followed by the north (60%) and central (49%) regions. Inequality is rising- the Gini coefficient increased from 0.339 to 0.461 between 2005 and 2017 (Sustainable Development Solutions Network 2017). Rural households are particularly vulnerable and it was estimated that some 57% of the rural population live in poverty.

The economy grew by 4.4% in 2019, up from 3.5% in 2018, mainly due to a weather-induced increase in agricultural production. Real gross domestic product growth for 2020 was projected at 4.8% based on the expectation of a second consecutive year of strong harvests. Growth is concentrated in a few primary commodities – tobacco (the main export earner), tea, soybeans and sugar. Maize production represents 34% of GDP, 85% of total employment in the agricultural sector, and 78% of total agricultural based exports (GRM 2020; Warnatzsh 2019). Repeated high fiscal deficits have contributed to an accumulation of domestic debt such that the stock of domestic debt increased from 28.2% to 29.7% of GDP between 2018 and 2019.

Malawi has made progress in building its human capital in recent years. For instance, life expectancy is now at 63.7 years (Government of Malawi 2018) while the total fertility rate is 4.4 children per woman (2015/2016), down from 6.7 in 1992. Self-reported literacy (reading and writing in any language) is 71.6% for males and 65.9% for females (15+ years of age). The current population is 17.2 million and is projected to reach 34.4 million by 2038 if current trends continue (World Bank, 2018a). This growth

is contributing to the depletion of natural resources, reducing productive capacity and increasing exposure to the effects of climate change. (World Bank, Malawi, July 2020).

Political and development

Malawi transitioned from a one-party state to a multi-party democracy in the mid-1990s. The current president, Lazarus Chakwera, was elected in June 2020 after Malawi's Supreme Court ordered a re-run of the election. Malawi's current medium-term development strategy, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III, covers the period 2017 to 2022. The MGDS III identified five key priority areas: (i) Agriculture, Water Development and Climate Change Management; (ii) Education and Skills Development; (iii) Transport and ICT Infrastructure; (iv) Energy, Industry and Tourism Development and (v) Health and Population.

Trade and aid

Malawi is poorly integrated into the region in terms of both trade and physical infrastructure. Economic progress is volatile and, as noted above, is often dependent on weather conditions. Trade is unstable, characterised by laws banning exports, lack of infrastructure, limited finance for farmers, and inadequate diversification. Tobacco accounts for 50% of exports and is highly vulnerable to price volatility. The lack of skilled workers makes the labour market dysfunctional indicating the need for vocational training and technical education to enhance employability and productivity. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is minimal, and confined mainly to mining, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, and services.

Malawi is the 20th largest market in Africa for Irish exports (out of 45 in total). However, total exports in 2018 amounted to just €6.5 million, that is, less than 1/20th of 1% of Ireland's total exports, and totalled €25 million during 2016-2019 (IMF, 2020). Ireland is in a trade surplus with Malawi, with exports from Ireland to Malawi steadily growing between 2016 and 2019, apart from a small decline in 2018. Primary exports to Malawi comprise concentrated milk (32%), malt extract (31%), medical instruments (18%), industrial food preparation machinery (9.4%) and office machinery (8%). Imports from Malawi into Ireland have increased from €140,000 in 2014 to €920,000 in 2019 (IMF, 2020) and consist primarily of tea and coffee. World Bank data (2019) indicates high volatility in net direct investment, as well as being consistently negative.

Table 2 Export and import values by year^ (IMF 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Irish Exports (€ million)	€4.19	€4.24	€4.77	€6.91	€6.02	€7.32
Irish Imports (€ million)	€0.14	€0.06	€0.11	€0.26	€0.34	€0.92
Net Irish Exports	€4.05	€4.18	€4.66	€6.65	€5.68	€6.40

^Exchange rate 1 USD = 0.924938 EUR 7.5.20 www.xe.com

Figure 2 Irish exports/imports to Malawi EUR (millions) Malawi 2008-2018

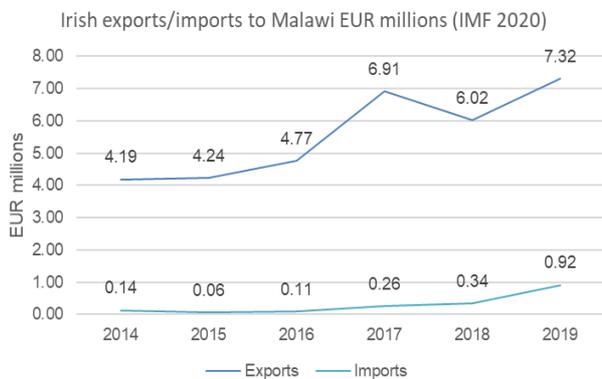
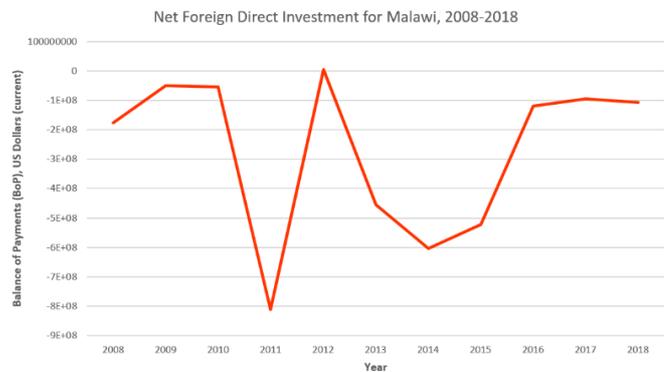


Figure 3 Net foreign direct investment for Malawi 2008-2018



Official Development Assistance (ODA) averaged over US\$1 billion per annum between 2016 and 2018, about US\$75 per capita each year. This compared to approx. US\$45 per capita in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. Although one of the poorest countries in the world in terms of GNI per capita, Malawi receives more aid per capita than any other African country – even more than comparatively poorer countries such as Burundi, Central African Republic, D.R. Congo, Liberia and Niger. Over-dependence on ODA, according to some observers, has also created an unhealthy dynamic between Government and development partners (World Bank, 2018e) with development partners, as well as national and international NGOs, tending to fill the development space where the Government has not.

Climate change context

Malawi is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate events given its multi-dimensional risk factors, high poverty rates and dependence on its natural resources for the livelihoods and productive sectors. (IPCC 2019; World Bank 2019). Malawi’s environmental cycles of decline and degradation have created complex and inter-related drivers. Climate change has exacerbated inequality and has damaging consequences for land, forestry and environmental degradation, water, biodiversity, human health, food security, gender and economic prosperity to name but a few (Climate Health Africa 2017; IPCC 2018; Irish Aid 2018). Severe weather events such as flooding in 2015 and 2019 resulted in loss of life and the aggregate displacement of over 2.75 million people. The 2016 El Niño-related drought resulted in 39% of the population requiring emergency assistance (GRM 2019).

Gender context

Malawi has subscribed to a range of legal and normative gender policies at domestic and international levels. However, it faces developmental challenges in most sectors, inhibiting its ability to progress SDG 5: Gender Equality. Malawi is regionally and culturally diverse, with variations amongst its 250 Traditional Authorities. The influence of patrilineal and matrilineal chiefdoms, history, complex social norms and cultural practices on equality outcomes cannot be underestimated (UN Women 2018). Progress towards gender equality in the past two decades has been slow, as captured in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) below. Malawi has a GII global ranking of 149/189 and had a marginal decrease in inequality from 0.691 in 2000 to 0.615 in 2018 (UNDP 2019). Within-households Individual Deprivation Measures indicate that women and girls are worse off in all development dimensions (Bessel 2015). Women parliamentary representation is 16.7% and the overall labour force participation rate is 72.9% compared to 82.0% for men. Challenging harmful norms and sexual health and

reproductive rights is a difficult area to progress, as reflected in high adolescent birth rates of 132.7/1000 births (UNDP 2019). Despite some gains in legal and policy footholds, women and girls in Malawi remain strongly disadvantaged in areas such as education, health, livelihoods and human rights (UN Women 2018a). Overall, Malawian women are more likely than men to be unemployed and remain the most disadvantaged in the job market. Despite the positive signalling in national policies and subscription to international normative architecture, very serious challenges remain in reducing inequalities for women and girls in Malawi (UN Women 2018a).

Figure 4 Human Development Index (UNDP 2019)

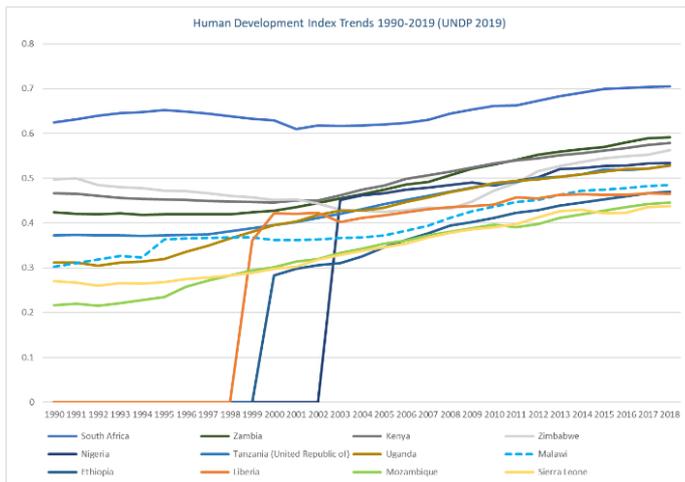
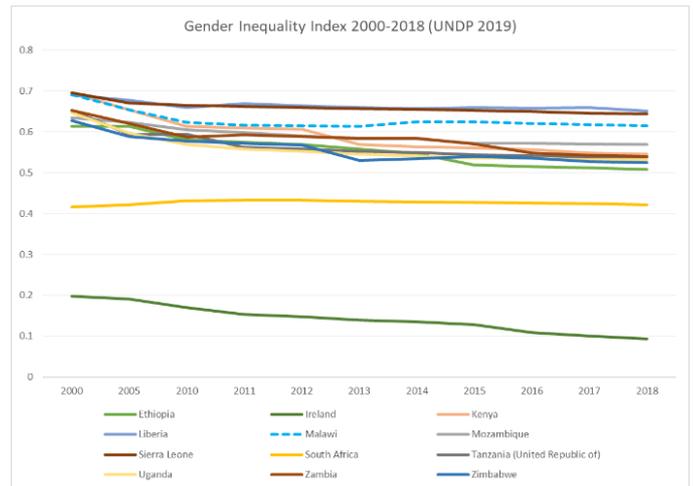


Figure 5 Gender Inequality Index (UNDP 2019)



Note on graph: Gender equality = 0

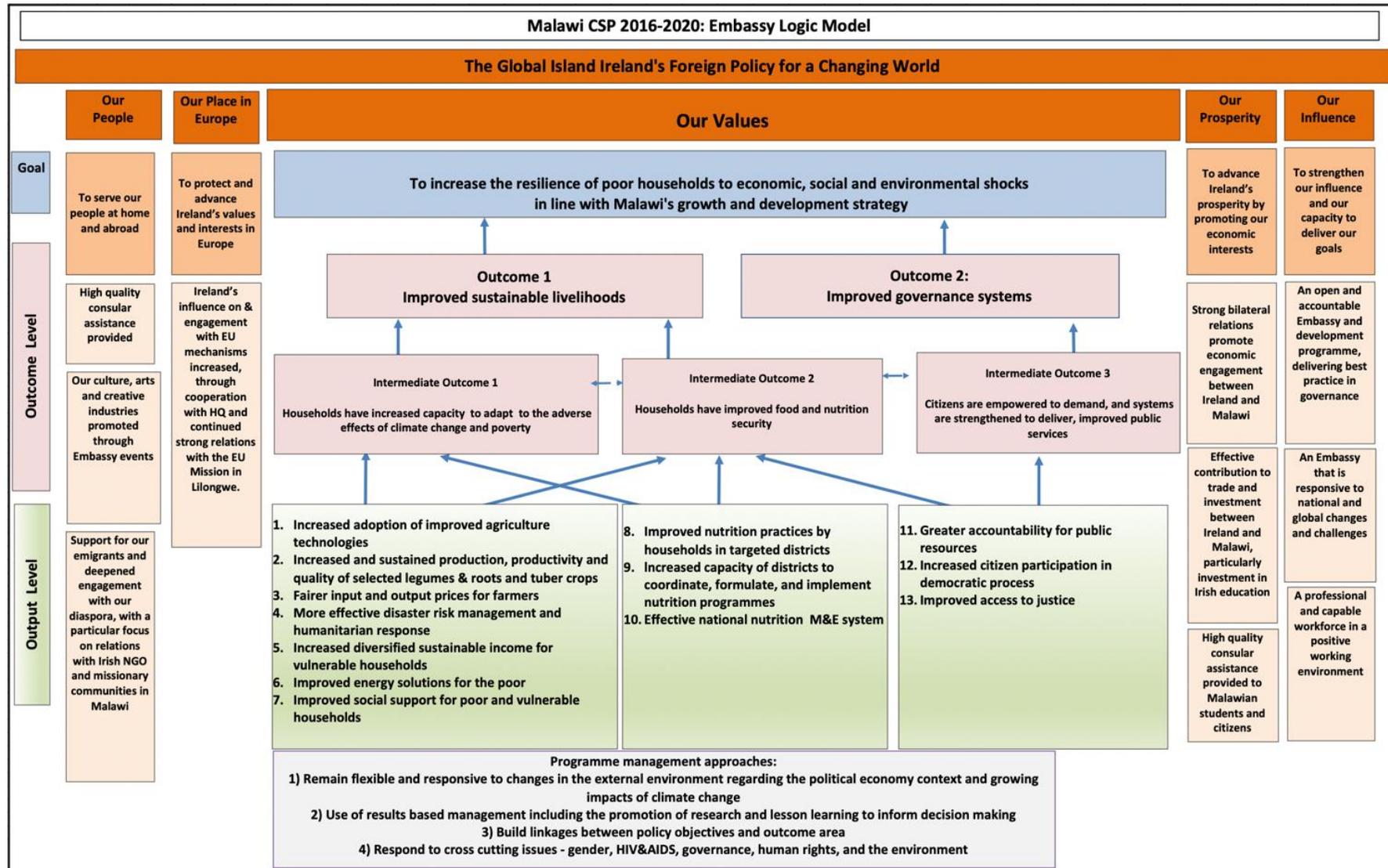
3. Overview of the CSP

The Malawi CSP 2016-2020 was designed to contribute to all five High Level Strategic Goals of Ireland’s foreign policy *The Global Island*. While having links to all themes, the main focus of Ireland’s engagement with Malawi is development programming and responding to the need for a fairer, more sustainable and just world. The Embassy sought to increase the resilience of poor households to economic, social and environmental shocks in line with Malawi’s Growth and Development Strategy. The evaluation examined results for each of the CSP’s five outcome pillars (see below diagram) with the following strategic goals:

1. Our People: ‘to serve our people at home and abroad’;
2. Our Place in Europe: ‘to protect and advance Ireland’s values and interests in Europe’;
3. Our Values: ‘to increase the resilience of poor households to economic, social and environmental shocks in line with Malawi’s growth and development strategy’;
 - a. **Outcome one:** Improved sustainable livelihoods
 - b. **Outcome two:** Improved governance systems
4. Our Prosperity: ‘to advance Ireland’s prosperity by promoting our economic interests’; and
5. Our influence: ‘to strengthen our influence and our capacity to deliver our goals’.

Key strategic priorities included shifting from an annual humanitarian response towards a long-term resilience approach; increasing agriculture and dietary diversity; enhancing gender equality and women’s empowerment; and promoting greater public accountability. These priorities were reflected across all levels of the mission’s partnerships and political engagement using a whole-of-Embassy approach. The mission proposed management approaches that were flexible and responsive, utilised results based management, promoted research and lesson learning to inform decision making and built linkages between policy objectives and outcome areas.

Figure 6 CSP Logic Model 2016-2020



3.1 Programme spend by goal and outcome area

During the period 2016 to 2020, the Embassy spent €73.2 million in support of its development programme in Malawi, excluding administration costs. The components of this spend were as follows:

- €26.3 million in the area of building resilience to climate change and socio-economic stress;
- €35.2 million in the area of food security, nutrition and agriculture;
- €8.4 million in the area of governance and improved public services;
- €3.3 million on programme administration, monitoring, research and learning.

The four most significant areas of intervention, as measured in terms of expenditure, were:

- (i) Social cash transfers and non-monetary emergency response and resilience building;
- (ii) Agricultural productivity, production and income building activities;
- (iii) Support for improved nutrition; and
- (iv) Support for the National ID programme.

Table 3 CSP Annual expenditure 2016-2020

Description	2016 €	2017 €	2018 €	2019 €	2020^ €	Totals €
Outcome 1 – Resilience & humanitarian	4,694,445	3,898,056	4,419,875	5,647,826	7,681,000	€26,341,202
Outcome 2 – Food & nutrition security	7,328,384	7,437,000	7,129,920	7,349,672	5,960,000	€35,204,976
Outcome 3 - Governance	1,106,250	1,670,685	2,596,449	1,800,430	1,220,000	€8,393,814
Programme admin, monitoring, research & learning	581,296	593,276	713,145	722,612	682,000	€3,292,329
Programme total	13,710,375	13,599,017	14,859,389	15,520,540	15,543,000	€73,232,321
Administration expenditure	843,213	1,049,873	569,564	617,543	1,278,000	€4,358,193
Totals	€14,553,588	€14,648,890	€15,428,953	€16,138,083	€16,821,000	€77,590,514

Source: Embassy audited accounts 2016-2019; ^desk communication 2020.

4. Effectiveness Findings

This section discusses effectiveness of the Embassy in relation to the CSP's high-level goals and outcomes associated with Our People, Our Influence, Our Prosperity, Our Place in Europe and Our Values (the development assistance programme).

4.1 Our people

Summary of Key Findings

- The Embassy provided responsive and professional consular services, assisting Irish citizens in Malawi as well as efficient provision of digitised and up to date travel advice.

However, exogenous factors such as electricity cuts and ICT issues impeded the ability of the mission to operate efficiently.

- The Embassy continues to provide valuable support and meaningful engagement with Irish emigrants, the diaspora and Irish NGOs, as well as the promotion of Irish culture, arts and creative industries through Embassy events.

Key Finding 1: The Embassy provided responsive and professional consular services, assisting Irish citizens in Malawi as well as efficient provision of digitised and up to date travel advice. However, exogenous factors such as electricity cuts and ICT issues impeded the ability of the mission to operate efficiently.

Between 2016 and June 2020, the Embassy facilitated 66 passports, 21 foreign birth registrations, processed 966 visas, and conducted eight DNA tests (Embassy of Ireland, 2016; 2017; 2018a; 2019a). Embassy staff worked effectively with international partners to assist Irish citizens, ensuring their interests were supported in times of need. High profile complex cases between 2016 and 2020 were resolved professionally, with one case involving six individuals being reported positively in Irish and Malawian media. Travel advice was updated regularly, reflecting the changing security situation post-elections in 2019 when political violence was erupting.

Table 4 Consular data 2016-June 2020 (Source: Embassy of Ireland, Malawi 2020)

Service	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Passports issued	14	32	20	3*	0	69
Foreign Birth Registrations	4	14	2	1	0	21
Visas processed	231	213	242	246	34	966
DNA tests	0	0	5	3	0	8
Consular cases	0	2	0	2	3	7

* Passport renewals for adults moved online in 2018 and children were included from mid-2019. These figures are only for paper applications

Embassy annual reports noted turnaround times for visa applications processed under delegated sanction remained 'stable at under 10 working days', with some delays due to frequent electricity cuts, ICT challenges, and hardware problems with the consular passport computer, scanner and printer (Embassy of Ireland, 2016; 2017; 2018a; 2019a). It is unclear what percentage of applications were processed within the target of under 10 days. While outside the control of the Embassy, the Embassy annual reports also noted applications referred to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) for decision experienced significant delays which sometimes resulted in applicants missing their travel dates or the beginning of courses of study. More reliable access to the ICT system, hardware and electricity supply might have improved overall efficiency⁵. Two annual reports and interviews noted attempts to improve the office environment through a much needed Embassy relocation, however the relocation is pending identification of a premises with suitable security standards.

⁵ The Embassy would be in the best position to identify if/what infrastructure might be most suitable to support efficiency in the challenging operational context.

Key Finding 2: The Embassy continues to provide valuable support and meaningful engagement with Irish emigrants, the diaspora and Irish NGOs, as well as the promotion of Irish culture, arts and creative industries through Embassy events.

In line with the Government of Ireland's Diaspora Policy (Government of Ireland, 2015b), the Embassy maintained strong links with its Irish community of approximately 80 citizens living in Malawi. The Embassy ensured Ireland's culture and people-to-people networks were nurtured. Ireland's interests were advanced, as well as being able to contact citizens rapidly when required.

Documentary, interview, focus group and social media evidence from the evaluation reflected engagement with Irish NGOs and missionaries on areas of mutual interest including the NGO bill⁶, development cooperation, promoting transparent institutions, democracy and elections.

Good evidence of institutional and cross-country linkages being fostered were apparent across diverse areas such as reconciliation, higher education, research, human rights, environmental and civil society groups as well as health and governance. Irish institutions involved include Trinity College Dublin, Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, Victims and Survivors from Northern Ireland, Habitat for Humanity Ireland, the Public Service Union of Northern Ireland and Front Line Defenders (Embassy of Ireland, 2018a; 2019a). Interviews with stakeholders from these groups noted the Embassy was open, transparent and supportive of their interests, facilitating linkages and support as required.

Between 2016 and 2019, over 4,750 people participated in Irish culture, arts and creative industries promoted through Embassy events. Irish music, culture and food were promoted at St Patrick's Day, St Brigid's Day and EU Day, in partnership with the Irish community and the Irish Malawi Society in both Lilongwe and Blantyre. All Irish diaspora members interviewed highlighted the value of connection to Irish culture for their families through engaging in these events, as well as the Irish Malawi Society. Externally, Government stakeholders commented (unprompted) on St Patrick's Day as a welcome event to network and celebrate Irish culture. The Honorary Consul in Blantyre provided valuable services to the Irish community, and retired in 2019 after 18 years of service.

4.2 Our influence

Summary of Key Findings

- The Embassy was politically astute, technically capable, flexible and an exemplar in aligning and leveraging all aspects of the work of the mission to deliver a strategy that was relevant and responsive to the needs and development priorities of Malawi.
- The Embassy's public diplomacy initiatives and stance on fundamental human rights and supporting international normative frameworks, such as sustainability and climate action, further Ireland's interests and positive reputation.
- Donors and partners identified the Embassy as a strong collaborator in furthering policy agendas through and within coordination platforms.
- The Embassy's approach to research, evidence and learning on a number of initiatives has resulted in knowledge exchange, with some of these efforts resulting in residual outcomes beyond the lifetime of the CSP.

⁶ The NGO bill proposes to change existing governance frameworks and establish stronger regulatory frameworks and penalties for NGOs including, but not limited to, fines and imprisonment for failing to comply with regulations imposed by cabinet appointed authorities. <https://bit.ly/2CQGTGIG>

Key Finding 3: The Embassy was politically astute, technically capable, flexible and an exemplar in aligning and leveraging all aspects of the work of the mission to deliver a strategy that was relevant and responsive to the needs and development priorities of Malawi.

The CSP was relevant and responsive to the needs and development priorities of Malawi. Reflective of the bilateral relationship and partnership approach, the CSP was endorsed by the Government of Malawi in 2016 (Embassy of Ireland, 2016). The Embassy's approach was appropriate and coherent with the Government of Malawi's policies and strategies. Despite the limitations in implementation of the MGDS III and Resilience Strategy, the CSP was contextually relevant and responsive to these priorities, Irish foreign policy and international frameworks such as the SDGs. Government officials noted the coherence of the Embassy's work with Malawian policy.

The Embassy was found to be politically astute, technically capable, flexible and an exemplar in aligning and leveraging all aspects of the work of the mission. The Embassy's development and political engagement are cohesive and mutually reinforcing. The Embassy has advanced Ireland's strategic interests through bilateral, regional and multilateral engagement and contributed to Ireland's successful campaign to secure a non-permanent seat on the Security Council (UNSC) for 2021-22. Building on its strong reputation for promoting development cooperation, the Embassy was recognised among its peers and partners for its expertise, principled approach and ability in navigating a challenging operating environment. Almost all partners and peers interviewed reported Ireland as well-respected for its strong technical capabilities and political approach to development effectiveness. One peer noted the critical and strategic importance of having a mission present in-country for leveraging the political and development approach.

Key Finding 4: The Embassy's public diplomacy initiatives and stance on fundamental human rights and supporting international normative frameworks such as sustainability and climate action further Ireland's interests and positive reputation.

The Embassy has engaged strongly on Malawian initiatives and has solidified a positive reputation in public fora. Green initiatives were undertaken, such as recycling, reduction in single-use plastics, solar panels on the residence (which is a working environment) as well as promoting environmental sustainability through its development programme. The Embassy's micro-initiatives are also notable and further the interests and positive reputation of Ireland. In addition to the facilitation of high-level visits that consolidate domestic support for Official Development Assistance (ODA), the Embassy has participated in numerous local events. Initiatives such as school openings, supporting the ban on international wildlife crime, supporting access to justice and an astute use of the Head of Mission micro-fund, are examples of low investment-high reward activities that build Ireland's reputation. The Embassy has been strong in the promotion of international norms, and evidence has emerged through interviews with partners and missions of the Embassy utilising its strategic relationships to engage on sensitive issues.

Digital diplomacy

A social media analysis of the Embassy's digital diplomacy efforts reflected coherence with peer missions, as well as opportunities to increase the digital footprint and promotion. Joint statements available through the Embassy's social media (Twitter) reflect a cohesive partnership with peer missions as well as strong advocacy of peaceful electoral transitions, prisoner rights, albinism,

human rights and the promotion of democratic principles. The Embassy has seen five-fold growth in its social media followers of 629 in 2016 to 3,240 in May 2020. Analysis of all Embassy tweets reflects references to Malawi Government (41), 'women' (40), EU in Malawi (31) and 'partners' (18). Growth was most likely due to the expanding use of these platforms.

A brief network analysis shows **peers and partners take different and sometimes inconsistent approaches to tagging the Embassy or acknowledging funding**. The EU tagged @IrlEmbMalawi more frequently than partners at the time of analysis⁷. Where the Embassy's handle was included, impressions and likes increased and thus digital visibility. Acknowledgment of funding is likely to increase public awareness as well as solidifying Ireland's positive presence in Malawi. However, there is an inconsistency in branding with the Embassy/Ireland and Irish Aid being used interchangeably by partners, HQ-funded Irish NGOs and DFA staff alike, a matter to be resolved at HQ rather than the mission.

Table 5 Twitter profile (Source: Embassy of Ireland, Malawi 2020)

Twitter data	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Twitter followers	629	1,300	2,000	2,850	3,240
Following	-	-	-	-	671
Follower ratio	-	-	-	-	4.83

Press mentions and website visits were not captured in this evaluation. However, they may be a source for documenting public diplomacy successes. A dedicated communications working group oversees the planning and strategic messaging by the Embassy staff, who have participated in communications training. At the time of writing, the communications plan and strategy for engagement for the Embassy was under development. This may shed light on targets as well as the position of the Embassy as a funder when partners regularly publicise positive results. The Embassy's partners (and those funded by HQ) had strong visibility, possibly more than the Embassy in some instances. For example, some of Ireland's key partners and peers such as LUANAR, IFPRI, Trócaire, United Purpose, DfID, GiZ and the World Bank were acknowledged as key development partners in Malawi's National Resilience Strategy (2018-2030). Government officials were often unaware that Ireland funded these partners.

Key Finding 5: Donors and partners identified the Embassy as a strong collaborator in furthering policy agendas through and within coordination platforms.

The Embassy's technical engagement with donor and programme coordination platforms has contributed to policy coherence. The Embassy played a coordinating role among development partners through several platforms. For example, the Embassy focused on two areas in the MGDS III priority areas of agriculture and health (nutrition) to chair the relevant donor committees during the CSP. In another example, the Embassy chaired the Donor Committee on Nutrition, handing over the chair to the WFP in June 2019. The Embassy also took on the lead as chair of the Donor Committee on

⁷ The EU tagged @IrlEmbMalawi more frequently than partners at 36 times, whilst NASFAM tagged @Irish_Aid (8), Save the Children Malawi (3), United Purpose (1). Date analysed 20/2/2020.

Agriculture in July 2019, as well as taking its turn as chair of the Heads of Cooperation Coordination Group.

Key Finding 6: The Embassy's approach to research, evidence and learning on a number of initiatives has resulted in knowledge exchange, with some of these efforts resulting in residual outcomes beyond the lifetime of the CSP.

The Embassy has been an innovator on a number of initiatives and these efforts have residual outcomes beyond the lifetime of the CSP. Success was stronger where investments were programmatic, rather than micro-project research which had mixed and sometimes conflicting results. It is evident the Embassy has taken a multipronged approach to research, evidence, management and learning approach, utilising pilots and research projects that informed policy, programming and knowledge exchange opportunities. For example, through strategic foresight as well as a deep commitment to learning, Embassy investments have resulted in identifying, researching, testing, piloting and scaling up transformative initiatives such as e-payments and national ID cards. These initiatives would not have occurred without the political leveraging and astuteness of Embassy staff.

The Embassy's investment in research and programming on seed systems contributed to the increased availability of climate smart, nutritionally diverse food crops such as orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, groundnuts and pigeon peas. The work with the International Potato Centre (CIP) is an innovative example, intervening in the seed system to sustain it and develop its infrastructure, as well as impacting on livelihoods and working through strong links to local government. Consultation with the CIP programme illustrated the synergies in the way the Embassy is supporting basic research into crop varieties in an association with the Root and Tuber Crop Development Trust.

The Embassy's long-term investments in initiatives such as that with CIP have resulted in a strong contribution to academic knowledge in peer-reviewed literature. In the past five years, a number of peer-reviewed articles published in academic journals acknowledged the Embassy as a core funder or participant in their research. The Embassy's research footprint extended also to strengthening links, people-to-people and institutional connections such as facilitating aforementioned research visits with TCD and RCSI. The Embassy also had an influential role in terms of piloting initiatives and supporting research as part of its programming.

4.3 Our prosperity

Summary of Key Findings

- The Embassy's approach to promoting trade and investment for sustainable development was realistic, although there may be some limited scope to extend this further.
- The Embassy has made a positive contribution to Ireland's formal and informal international education connections through support of a fellowship programme during the course of the CSP.

Key Finding 7: The Embassy's approach to promoting trade and investment for sustainable development was realistic, although there may be some limited scope to extend this further.

The Embassy's approach to promoting economic engagement for sustainable development was realistic, however some opportunities may be capitalised upon. While there have been steady increases in net Irish exports to Malawi, economic engagement is tempered by a difficult and volatile business environment. The Embassy was cognisant of these challenges and takes a realistic approach to supporting the small number of Irish businesses that operate in Malawi, which average three per annum. Support includes facilitating introductions and trade visits, alerting businesses to tenders, as well as participation trade forums. The Embassy's approach was well-placed, but looking forward, there is potential for stronger engagement in line with *the Africa Strategy*. This includes the potential to engage more intensively and specifically in activities that promote economic inclusion, job creation and trade policy reform, although this may not be an area of comparative advantage for the Embassy or DCAD/DFA. There was varied understanding of opportunities and policy coherence of the mission's approach to the prosperity outcome area in relation to economic engagement.

The bilateral relationship was reported to be good according to Malawian Government officials, but was impeded by high turnover of Government staff and the difficult operating environment. Interviews with Government officials indicated a mutually respectful political and development relationship between the two countries.

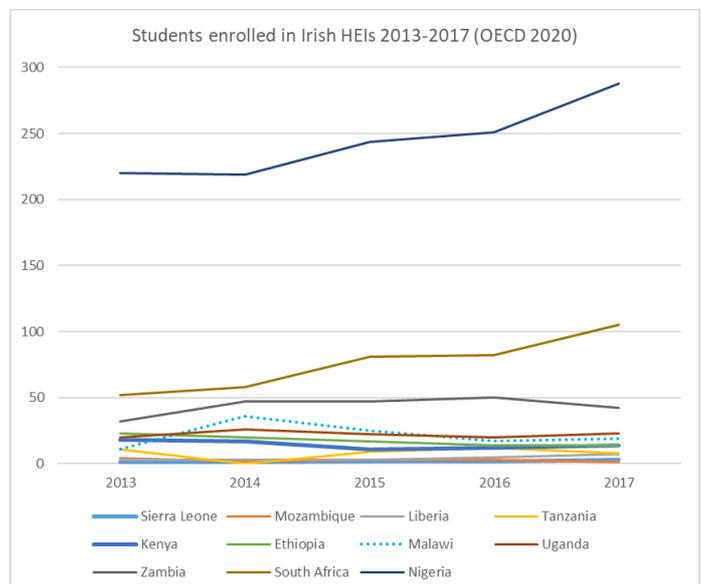
Key Finding 8: The Embassy has made a positive contribution to Ireland's formal and informal international education connections through support of a fellowship programme during the course of the CSP.

International education

The Embassy was an interlocutor in the provision of advice and support for Malawian students and has made a modest contribution in this area. As well as clearly laying out the promotion of education as a key outcome in the CSP, *Global Island* (Government of Ireland, 2018) and *Irish Educated, Globally Connected* (Department of Education and Skills 2016), the current five-year strategy for international education emphasised the strategic value of attracting international students to Ireland. **The international education sector in Ireland was valued at €1.5 billion per annum as well as being an important aspect of Ireland's global footprint.**

Within Malawi, the gross enrolment rate of tertiary education is less than 1% (Government of Malawi, 2018). International education and training opportunities assist in promoting Ireland's international reputation and people-to-people connections, contribute to the domestic economy, enrich the diversity of the student population, and expand Ireland's formal and informal institutional connections internationally (Department of Education and Skills, 2016; Government of Ireland, 2018). Available OECD (2020) data⁸ indicates that an average of 20 Malawian

Figure 7 Students enrolled in Irish HEIs (OECD 2020)



⁸ Data extracted on 30 Apr 2020 14:44 UTC (GMT) from OECD. Stat 2020 'Enrolment of international students by origin' [Online]. Available: <https://bit.ly/2Bzrs4D>

students were enrolled per annum in third-level education in Ireland between 2013 and 2017. An estimated 9.2% of fellowships funded by the Department were allocated to Malawian students.

Fellowships

The fellowship programme contributed to both Our Prosperity and Our Values, as it reinforces the international education agenda, but also has a distinct function of building capacity in Malawi and fostering a network of alumni. Between 2016 and 2020, 28 fellows were supported by the Embassy in partnership with HQ to undertake postgraduate studies in Ireland. A total of 77 Malawian fellows were supported from 2000⁹ to 2020¹⁰. Both Embassy and HQ staff noted in interviews the improvements in efficiencies because of moving applications to an online system. **The strategy of selecting fellowship applicants from partners and the Government of Malawi is likely to return modest but important dividends.** There was varied understanding amongst the mission team of the opportunities to promote international education or training beyond DFA fellowships such as higher education, postgraduate scholarships and research.

The two-way value of promoting international education fosters people-to-people and institutional connections. Examples of this include supporting partners and Government officials undertaking fellowships. Three interviewees who were recipients of fellowships reflected the great value individuals place on receiving such opportunities, noting their gratitude and positive perception of the Embassy, Irish culture and the benefits the course has had on their professional development and subsequent contribution to their own work in Malawi. While international education is clear as a high-level outcome in the CSP and business plan, Embassy annual reports do not appear to highlight the work the Embassy does in this area, however modest (Embassy of Ireland, 2016; 2017; 2018a; 2019a).

4.4 Our place in Europe

Summary of Key Findings

- The Embassy has worked very closely with other EU member states and institutions in relation to a range of shared political and developmental issues.

Key Finding 9: The Embassy has worked very closely with other EU member states and institutions in relation to a range of shared political and developmental issues.

The Embassy had strong and collaborative political and development cooperation relationship with the EU. EU and Irish partnership is ubiquitous in the Malawian context. Evident from interviews, joint statements, public diplomacy and co-funding arrangements, the EU Delegation and the Embassy have a strong and mutually beneficial political and development relationship. In the course of the CSP, a number of joint demarches have occurred on challenges such as international human rights and disarmament, for example to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in support of ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty in 2016 (Embassy of Ireland 2016).

⁹ Malawian students were supported through fellowships prior to the opening of the Embassy.

¹⁰ As per Global Programmes communication August 2020.

Joint programming initiatives of national programmes were implemented including agriculture, nutrition, election support, national ID system and public finance management systems, reflective of Ireland's deep engagement with the EU (Embassy of Ireland 2018). Joint positions reflected a principled approach to anti-corruption campaigns, gender equality, and the elections observation process in 2019. With the recent withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, Ireland and Germany are in a strategic position as the only resident EU Member States in Malawi to continue working closely with the EU Delegation.

Ireland engages on a range of issues through the Cotonou Agreement Article 8 dialogues on subjects such as corruption, regional relations, the Lake Malawi project, and the ODA environment. Engagement with the EU Delegation in Malawi has resulted in leveraging additional support and funding that was channelled into development programming. Social media cross-referencing discussed earlier adds further evidence of a strong and collaborative relationship.

4.5 Our Values

This section discusses the effectiveness and high-level results of the Embassy's development cooperation work. The Embassy promoted the resilience of Malawi's people by working to improve sustainable livelihoods and access to justice, and strengthen governance systems and participation in democratic institutions. Overall, the CSP was focused on strategic partnerships delivered through a range of modalities that targeted the poorest and most vulnerable households, while continuing to strengthen Government systems through national initiatives for the benefit of all communities in Malawi. Two programmes work directly with the Government of Malawi with the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Local Government. Most delivery partners are international NGOs or other international bodies (10), and two are national NGOs.

Summary of Key Findings

- The Embassy's piloting, development and implementation of flexible shock-responsive electronic cash transfers resulted in improvements in efficiency of social support for poor and vulnerable households and innovation that informed policy and practice.
- The Embassy contributed to preparation and response to crises caused by natural hazards such as flooding and drought.
- Long-term investment in Malawi's seed systems resulted in the increased availability of clean, climate smart, nutritionally diverse food crops such as orange fleshed sweet potatoes, and sorghum, millet, ground-nuts and pigeon peas. However, some challenges were identified in access to markets.
- Work with international donor and NGO partners in the area of improved household food and nutrition security showed positive results and includes examples where a national impact is also apparent.
- In a restrictive operating context, the Embassy supported a range of governance approaches resulting in increased participation in democratic processes and access to justice. However, numerous systemic challenges remain in relation to accountability, human rights and public resources.
- The national ID card programme was an example of the Embassy's astute interlinkages in political, piloting and development advocacy work resulting in access to public services and participation in democratic processes.

PMF status (November 2019)

- On track to exceed target
- On track
- Slightly behind target
- Off track/off target
- No data available yet

The PMF contained a mixture of high-level indicators, measured at a national level, that were useful as monitoring tools such as poverty, hunger, corruption and household assets. Partner performance was best ascertained when indicators were directly attributable to interventions in the targeted communities. For example, nutrition practices in targeted districts. The status markers therefore, should be interpreted with caution as much of the data was collected in 2019. Where possible, the evaluators have utilised partner/project level progress rather than national indicators to give a sense of progress at the level of the intervention.

Improved support for vulnerable households

Key Finding 10: The Embassy's piloting, development and implementation of flexible shock-responsive electronic cash transfers resulted in improvements in efficiency of social support for poor and vulnerable households and innovation that informed policy and practice.

Social Cash Transfer

● On track to exceed target

Social Cash Transfer has been an effective and flexible mechanism to improve food security among ultra-poor households. Notably, the Embassy was a key partner in the piloting, development and vertical scale-up of efficient and shock-responsive electronic cash transfers that were successfully tested during the 2017/2018 lean season in Balaka (Embassy of Ireland, 2018b). The pilot helped operationalise key Government priorities on shock-sensitive social protection as outlined in the National Resilience Strategy and the Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP) II. The vertical expansion mechanism targeted a proportion of the existing social cash transfer recipients in Balaka and Ntcheu districts with time-bound, 'top-up' payments. Based on the successful pilot, it was made available as an approach to be activated by the Ministry of Gender during crisis periods such as the 2018/2019 lean season. It was cited¹¹ as having long-lasting impact, and particularly because of its scalability as an innovative model that other development partners wanted to replicate. The mechanism was designed in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, UNICEF, UK DfID, and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MoEPD).

As of November 2019, the Embassy has supported 23,000 households receiving timely and predictable cash transfer payments. This support was vital and contributed to overall wellbeing, food security, meeting school costs and asset accumulation. The proportion of Government of Malawi contributions to SCT costs was on target at 10%. The proportion of operational costs to beneficiary payments was 23%, which is marginally higher than the target of 15%, due to retargeting and initial set up costs.

Key Finding 11: The Embassy contributed to preparation and response to crises caused by natural hazards such as flooding and drought.

Malawi is highly vulnerable to climatic shocks with cyclical humanitarian crises such as drought, flood and an annual lean season. The policy-to-implementation gap and scale of developmental needs in

¹¹ The Embassy's work was also supported by a HQ-managed partnership with the IDS over the 2018-2020 period, which resulted in a number of publications including a case study on cash transfers in Malawi and the scope for expansion of shock-responsive social protection.

Malawi compound the challenges in developing adequate preparedness and, in some instances, prevention of humanitarian need. Nevertheless, between 2017 and 2019, approximately 6.2 million people nationally received support as part of a multi-donor, multi-partner and national response. Some of these responses, such as the flexible support for Social Cash Transfers in Balaka and Ntcheu districts, were part of a critical multi-donor effort to provide support for Malawi's ultra-poor and labour scarce households. The Embassy reported through the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) that broadly, participation in disaster risk reduction activities was high, all food insecure households were reached and warning systems were in place in vulnerable districts. Despite these notable successes, prevention of humanitarian crises was a major challenge. The support was delivered by a range of governmental, international and non-governmental organisations. Overall effectiveness and ability to plan was hampered by a number of factors, not least delayed vulnerability assessment reports in 2018 and 2019, poor coordination, and non-implementation of agreed supports from other actors beyond the control of the Embassy.

Lean season response

The Embassy supported flexible responses to seasonal humanitarian crises. These included the Government of Malawi's response to annual food shortages caused by predictable seasonal variations in rural poverty. As part of this, 21,304 households in two districts received flexible cash payments in the 2018/2019 lean season. These short-term responses provided vital aid in response to humanitarian need. The evaluation of the 2016-2017 relief support found that 93% of target households reported that assistance met their food and nutrition needs; and the average number of meals consumed by communities increased from 1.6 to 2.4 meals per day. There was a 76% reduction in the proportion of households reporting referral of their children under five years old to a nutritional rehabilitation unit between the baseline and the end line. Participation of households in voluntary savings and loan associations increased by around 160%. Access to high quality seed and planting material improved by 88% while cereal production improved by 56%.

2019 Zomba Floods

The Embassy responded to periodic natural disasters, such as providing assistance to households in Zomba following the floods caused by Cyclone Idai in April 2019. Two monthly cash disbursements to 5,500 families were distributed efficiently to meet immediate food needs. Save the Children also distributed seed, solar lamps, clean water and fuel-efficient cook stoves. An additional cash transfer was disbursed to 500 households whose houses had been destroyed, to purchase construction materials (Embassy of Ireland, 2019b)¹². Overall, the disaster response, including the vertical expansion of the SCT project, was effective with improvements suggested by community members and officials to be typical of humanitarian response. A local official stated: 'without the support of Save the Children and others, there would have been a wide scale-disaster'. Others underscored the anticipated difficulty in future disaster risk mitigation due to climate- and human-induced factors such as deforestation, lack of resources to build flood-resistant housing, and communities' reluctance to move from flood-prone areas. Focus group participants noted some adjustments might be considered for future responses, including needs-based delivery of locally relevant emergency supplies such as locally available and recognisable food items, and equitable distribution of goods. Zomba officials used the most recent needs assessment to inform their work, but noted that it could be updated.

¹² The project distributed orange-fleshed sweet potato vines in the two TAs of Mwambo and Malemia. It also supported 1,000 farmers on 34 irrigation sites, each receiving 2kg of maize seed, 10 grams of vegetable seeds (mustard and onion), 15kg of basal dressing and 15kg of top-dressing fertilizers. A total of 66 foot-operated treadle pumps were distributed to the identified 34 irrigation sites. In addition, 5,500 stoves were distributed, various trainings delivered, and child protection awareness campaigns conducted reaching 14,608 affected children (8,410 girls and 6,198 boys) with additional child support provided. Winter clothes were distributed to 300 most vulnerable children at the IDP camps. Various activities to improve water distribution and sanitation were supported (Embassy of Ireland 2019b).

Key finding 12: Long-term investment in Malawi's seed systems resulted in the increased availability of clean, climate smart, nutritionally diverse food crops such as orange fleshed sweet potatoes, and sorghum, millet, ground-nuts and pigeon peas. However, some challenges were identified in access to markets.

Agricultural productivity, production and incomes

● On track

The Embassy's support for agricultural productivity enhancements increased agricultural production. The Ministry of Agriculture via a World Bank-managed trust fund, the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM), the International Potato Centre (CIP) and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) were the main partners. Many of these partnerships had synergies with nutrition outcomes and promoting the use of climate-smart inputs and techniques.

- **Increased adoption of improved agriculture technologies:** In 2019 alone, 98,215 farmers (51.5% female, 48.5% male) utilised climate resilient and nutrition rich seeds and adjusted farming practices to improve soil quality and increase production, as a result of training. 47,906 hectares of conservation agriculture was developed by 38,982 farmers as a result of adjusted farming practices.
- Interviews with the CIP project indicated that Embassy support had helped the Ministry of Agriculture's research services to develop heat tolerant potatoes, strengthen seed diversification of crops and engage in advocacy. CIP's use of cassava in a wider range of products improved nutritional outcomes and provided commercial outlets that are new to the farmers. The involvement of the Root and Tuber Crops Development Trust provides a platform for the dissemination of this work on a national basis. However, as of November 2019¹³, there was partial progress towards targets for the quantity of 'certified' seed and 'early generation' seed production.
- **Increased and sustained production, productivity and quality of legumes, roots and tubers crops:** Site visits and evidence from CIP and ICRISAT point to success in increased and sustained production, productivity and quality of selected legumes and root and tuber crops.¹⁴ However, only the sweet potato sub-indicator at 22MT/ha, was on track to meet the target of 25MT/ha. Yields for maize, groundnuts, and beans have not shown improvement since the baseline assessment was conducted, although the baseline figures are not far below the 2020 targets, and so achievement is still possible.
- **Diversification of incomes:** The Embassy supported diversification, production and private sector engagement with 430,086 tonnes of legume seed traded in formal markets in 2019. 43 community grain banks in Chauma, Dedza and Kaphuka were established, mitigating food security challenges, diversifying incomes and benefitting 8,474 farmers (3,738 male; 4,736 female). A series of micro-enterprises supported such as soap making, cloth selling and small animal exchange schemes provided small additional incomes, though participants in these schemes noted they could benefit from stronger support in accessing markets for their products.
- **Fairer input and output prices:** The Embassy funded a range of partners to deliver fairer prices for smallholders. The Embassy acted to counter the distortionary effects of maize in Malawi's market in a range of ways including, but not limited to, helping to monitor the country's Strategic Grain Reserves, and working with NASFAM to diversify agricultural output.

¹³ Results and data availability is seasonal and although evaluation was conducted late in year four, data for agricultural production was in many instances would have been cumulative to year three.

Community-managed grain banks supported food security and collectives to work for fairer prices.

- **Adaptation to crop blight disease:** The Embassy responded quickly to an outbreak of blight by supporting CIP to distribute clean seed to farmers who subsequently produced 191,878 tonnes of potato seed in time for the planting season.
- **There were mixed results in accessing formal markets:** While the Embassy has invested in supporting improved access to markets through the World Bank, the results were mixed across projects, with some of the projects more successful than others. Improving access to markets and certification of produce remains an area of potential growth for micro-enterprises and farmers alike.

Key Finding 13: Work with international donor and NGO partners in the area of improved household food and nutrition security showed positive results and includes examples where a national impact is also apparent.

Better nutritional practices

● On track

The Embassy funded partners who delivered strong results around improved nutrition practices, improved capacity of districts for nutrition programmes, and more effective nutrition monitoring and evaluation. The Embassy delivered support in nutrition through three delivery partners.

- **Improved nutrition practices by households in targeted districts:** Between 2018 and 2019, the Embassy reported a decrease in undernutrition of 30% in the key target district Dedza. Lactating mothers in Balaka (72%) and Dedza (63%) exclusively breastfed for six months, close to the mid-term targets of 75% and 65% respectively. Likewise, 60.8% of children in Balaka and 59% in Dedza were classed as having anaemia, below the mid-term target of 61% but marginally higher than the CSP's 2020 target of 57%. The Embassy reported improving trends in anaemia, iron and vitamin A deficiency. However, it is unclear if these represent national averages or data from targeted interventions. Zinc deficiency is prevalent and the percentage of breastfed children aged 6-23 months meeting the minimum acceptable diet has worsened over the course of the CSP.
- **Reflecting adaptation to context, micronutrient deficiency levels and poor infant feeding practices were responded to** by the WFP, who distributed micronutrient powder in two districts. Feeding practice information was delivered through existing care groups; however, the efficacy of the messages is unclear from the reporting.
- **Evidence generation:** The Embassy funded a national nutrition survey that provided essential information on stunting, undernutrition and other health outcomes. Overall, evidence generation is a process that is broadly heading in the right direction with an array of micro-research projects supported through other partners, with varying degrees of success. Some research results were inconclusive or not what was anticipated.
- **Increased capacity of districts to coordinate, formulate and implement nutrition programmes:** The Embassy has made significant progress in improving district capacity to improve nutrition outcomes. Principal nutrition and HIV officers were placed in 28 districts, signalling the strengthening of capacity to coordinate nutrition programmes. Active Cluster Leader/Cluster Leaders for nutrition were recruited in both Balaka (85%) and Dedza (76%). The Embassy has also achieved a 100% rate of implementation of multi-sectoral and costed

action plans for nutrition in targeted districts. However, it is off track in achieving targets for moderate acute malnutrition treatment in Dedza and Nkhata Bay.

- Utilisation of the national nutrition M&E system: The Embassy reported overall improvements in case reporting for nutrition in Balaka and Dezda districts.
- Vulnerabilities remain: Despite the noteworthy progress, there remains a significant gap in the implementation of nutrition policy across the board, which is largely attributed to resourcing challenges. Rates of minimum acceptable diets were low and dietary diversity practices poor.

Key finding 14: The national ID card programme was an example of the Embassy's astute interlinkages in political, piloting and development advocacy work resulting in transformative access to public services and participation in democratic processes.

Increased citizen participation in democratic processes ● **On track to exceed target**

The Embassy helped support the introduction of a national ID card system. Approximately 9.9 million Malawians have been registered and 98% of these have been issued a national ID card. Moreover, 81% of the population have registered to vote, which surpasses the CSP's final target of 70% (Embassy of Ireland in Malawi PMF). The programme is benefiting Malawi as a whole, but particularly the very poor by facilitating better access to services. The National Registration and Identification System (NRIS) project surpassed its targets, both in terms of the number of Malawians registered in the National Register and the number of Malawians issued with a national ID card. The NRIS has strong potential to improve the well-being of Malawian people by guaranteeing their fundamental rights to identity, entitlement, and enjoyment of full citizenship in Malawi. The success of the programme was cited positively within both DFA and the Embassy, and more widely by project partners. Two indicators – a functioning national ID card system and voter participation in elections – was fully achieved. One of the indicators within this output, the number of CSO/CBO documented cases of influence at national and decentralised levels of Government and on non-governmental actors, is non-verifiable at the evaluation point.

Against the backdrop of a highly contested election process that included legal challenges, violence and protests, the Embassy provided support to the May 2019 tripartite elections through a pool fund managed by UNDP. This supported electoral process logistics, voter registration and civic education among others.

Key Finding 15: In a restrictive operating context, the Embassy supported a range of governance approaches resulting in increased participation in democratic processes and access to justice. However, numerous systemic challenges remain in relation to accountability, corruption, human rights and effective public sector management.

Improved governance systems ● **Slightly behind target**

In a restrictive and deteriorating operating context, the Embassy supported a range of governance approaches resulting in increased participation in democratic processes and access to justice. Notably, the Embassy supported good governance as a cross cutting theme in many aspects of its work, such as nutrition and social protection. However, as noted in the Embassy's 2019 annual report, numerous challenges remain in relation to accountability, corruption, human rights and public resource management that were outside of the Embassy's direct influence.

Improved access to justice

● Slightly behind target

Access to justice is a significant challenge across Malawi. The Embassy has contributed to this gap by supporting a number of initiatives including needs assessments for survivors of GBV, challenging death sentences, and supporting training and mentoring initiatives on child justice and law. Progress was made in improved processing rates and compliance with legal procedures. Irish Rule of Law International (IRLI) worked to support bail applications, camp courts and legal clinics, and assisted 236 prisoners. The end line evaluation for the IRLI programme found that it was relevant and effective. The programme was on track for the areas where it worked, with the exception of support to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions where additional engagement was needed (IRLI, 2017).

Greater accountability for public resources

● Slightly behind target

Consultations with project stakeholders indicated important ways the Embassy and other donors¹⁵ advocate for greater accountability for public resources by engaging with public financial management processes. There were other examples of effective policy engagement and influence at district level through DanChurchAid, which promotes advocacy via national platforms based on insights at project level¹⁶. However, the ratio of qualified to unqualified audits has not improved over the course of the CSP and, at zero, is below the CSP's target of 29/29 Districts.

Citizen's perception on corruption

● Off track

Corruption was a major challenge for donors and partners in Malawi. Citizen's perception of corruption was poor, however not attributed to the Embassy itself. How the Embassy navigated some of these issues is discussed in section 5.1.

4.6 Factors influencing effectiveness**Summary of Key Findings**

- While policies for social inclusion and equity are broadly favourable, the Embassy faced a challenging operating environment including limited Government resourcing, low levels of public transparency and accountability, and a continuing problem of corruption.
- The Embassy adapted to a challenging context using tactics such as flexibility, piloting innovative approaches, policy dialogue¹⁷, considered use of funding modalities and use of political analysis.
- The Embassy displayed awareness of and responsiveness to key challenges impeding development effectiveness and factors that influence the long-term growth and development of Malawi.

¹⁵ IMF, AfDB, World Bank, EU, DfID, Flanders, Norway, USAID and Germany.

¹⁶ Within the Embassy's work in empowering citizens to demand, and strengthening systems to deliver, improved public services there were examples of project work which effectively linked with an influence on national structures. In this instance issues primarily raised at village level were also escalated to national forums, for example through the national accountability summit, Ministry of Local Government, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Malawi Human Rights Commission, and Anticorruption Bureau.

¹⁷ A key component was 'Our Influence' discussed already in section 4.2. Key Finding 5 for example, referred to the Embassy as strong collaborators in furthering policy agendas through and within coordination platforms.

Key Finding 16: While policies for social inclusion and equity are broadly favourable, the Embassy faced a challenging operating environment including limited Government resourcing, low levels of public transparency and accountability and a continuing problem of corruption.

The success of the Embassy's development programme has been shaped by the wider context and particularly the operating, institutional and regulatory environment which was particularly challenging for development cooperation. Although Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, the Government of Malawi has supported policies and programmes for social protection that promote a minimal level of welfare for the most vulnerable. Poor households are highly vulnerable to volatile food and market prices, environmental shocks, broad human development challenges, and numerous exogenous factors exist that have both facilitated and impeded development effectiveness. These include:

- The Embassy adapted to a challenging context using tactics such as flexibility, piloting innovative approaches, policy dialogue, considered use of funding modalities and use of political analysis.
- **Policies for social inclusion/ equity:** Malawi has a plethora of strong policies that favour initiatives that are consistent with national poverty reduction priorities. This context has been favourable for the delivery of the Embassy's programmes. However, there remains a wide chasm between policy and implementation due to challenges such as resource constraints and an unfavourable operating context.
- **Highly constrained public finances and resources** in Malawi that limited the Government of Malawi's ability to support social cash transfers for example. Driving the country's poor performance in the CPIA¹⁸ Economic Management cluster is its fiscal policy (scored at 2.0). As was noted in the CSP, Malawi's fiscal policy has a direct bearing on many of the programmes supported by the Embassy including social protection. The funding for which is overwhelmingly dependent on external resources because of limited fiscal resources.
- **Public sector management¹⁹ and institutions:** The quality of Malawi's public sector management, particularly weaknesses in its public financial management capabilities, accountability and credibility, had a determining influence on the design and delivery of the Embassy's development programme in Malawi.
- **Politicisation of markets:** Government management of the regulatory environment for business was heavily affected by political economy considerations (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018). Periodic food shortages and the dominant role of agriculture in the economy has put maize at the centre of a social contract between the state and the people. Since the late 1990s the Government has attempted to guarantee food security, primarily through targeted inputs, subsidies and price stabilisation interventions. However, this system can be manipulated for political purposes and provides significant opportunities for patronage via non-transparent targeting, pricing and procurement (World Bank, 2018e).

¹⁸ The Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) rates countries against a set of 16 criteria grouped into four clusters ((i) economic management; (ii) structural policies; (iii) policies for social inclusion and equity; and (iv) public sector management and institutions. The criteria are focused on balancing the capture of the key factors that foster growth and poverty reduction, with the need to avoid undue burden on the assessment process. The CPIA exercise is intended to capture the quality of a country's policies and institutional arrangements, focusing on key elements that are within the country's control, rather than on outcomes (such as economic growth rates) that are influenced by events beyond the country's control. More specifically, the CPIA measures the extent to which a country's policy and institutional framework supports sustainable growth and poverty reduction and, consequently, the effective use of development assistance.

¹⁹ Malawi's overall score in the CPIA Public Sector Management and Institutions cluster is 3.2, which is greater than the Sub-Saharan African average (3.0). However, there are marked differences within this cluster (World Bank, 2018c). The GoM is a strong performer in terms of the efficiency of its resource mobilisation, the quality of its budgetary and financial management, and its support for property rights and rule-based governance. However, the GoM performs poorly in the areas of transparency, accountability, and corruption in the public sector, as well as the quality of its public administration – for each of these components Malawi is outperformed by the Sub-Saharan Africa average (World Bank, 2018c).

- **An uncertain environment for NGOs and freedom of expression:** Non-governmental bodies have delivered approximately 51% of the Embassy's programme. However, the environment for these NGOs and restrictions on freedom of expression are uncertain due to proposed changes in the regulatory environment under the NGO Bill. The proposed authority under the Bill would have the power to impose increased fines on organisations, sentence NGO leaders to prison terms and/or suspend and deregister organisations found to be in breach of the law.
- **Modality:** Channelling funds through NGOs gives the Embassy much greater control over its funds. However, this also exacerbates the challenge of development partners operating off-budget: the strain this places on Government systems to keep track of funding and implement development programmes coherently. While donors and a number of international NGOs continue to advocate for stronger coordination and tracking, the Government has yet to strengthen these mechanisms.

Under the circumstances, the Embassy's results should be noted in light of the challenging operating context for development effectiveness.

4.7 Additional considerations

Key finding summary

- The Embassy displayed awareness of and responsiveness to key challenges impeding development effectiveness and factors that influence the long-term development of Malawi.

Key Finding 17: The Embassy displayed awareness of and responsiveness to key challenges impeding development effectiveness and factors that influence the long-term development of Malawi.

The Embassy was clearly aware of the political context it operated in, and used its insight and expertise to deliver a development programme that was effective in responding to the context. The Embassy demonstrated careful consideration and awareness of numerous challenges related to implementation and the long-term development of Malawi. It sought to strategically balance these factors, while advocating for strengthening approaches where feasible.

Delivery modalities and Government of Malawi capacity

Overall, the balance between on-budget and off-budget funding is appropriate and modes of delivery were clearly considered by the Embassy. Continued low trust of Government fiduciary systems means that a large part of the Embassy's programme has mitigated risk by deliberately delivering through non-governmental delivery partners, and Government systems only where feasible to do so. This had the benefit of greater input into programming, increasing confidence in the financial management, procurement, disbursement and accounting systems used to safeguard and account for Irish resources. Although the Embassy does work closely with the Government in several other respects,

continued use of off-budget, non-governmental modes of delivery does little to build the capacity of Government public financial management systems, which is a critical requirement for longer term development in Malawi. Funding channelled through trust funds managed by multilaterals (e.g. ASWAp II) can, in principle, enable the Embassy to be part of much larger programmes and to bring its insights and experience from other projects to bear with positive influence on these large funds. However, these pooled arrangements can also prove unwieldy and, depending on the management of the funds, can in practice restrict the Embassy's influence over project decision-making.

Diversity of programming risks limiting depth of impact

The Embassy's development programme covers a wide range of areas (as reflected in the complexity of the PMF), which risked the negative unintended consequence of limiting depth of impact in some areas. The Embassy has been active across a wide range of sectors including several aspects of agriculture, energy, nutrition, resilience and livelihoods, public financial management, decentralisation, and democratic accountability²⁰. It has also operated across multiple geographic areas covering the length and breadth of the country. This has given the Embassy, which combines a political and developmental remit, a stake in a wide range of issues and hence access to Government counterparts across the policy spectrum. Yet spreading itself so thinly when the overall annual development programme average is less than €15 million, risks undermining the developmental effectiveness of the Embassy. While the political and diplomatic role of the Embassy undoubtedly helps advance policy and supports a programme that clearly responds to Government priorities, there is also a risk that the spread is too great and becomes less optimal from a development perspective.

Implications of funding controls for programmes

Although the Embassy had a number of multi-annual frameworks with partners, nevertheless annual budgets for programmes had the unintended consequence of limiting the ability of some partners to undertake medium term resource planning and operational management. The Embassy has maintained tight control over the length of funding commitments it makes to implementing partners. This has had the merit of maintaining tight control over deliverables and minimised the risk of loss of funds. However, short term funding commitments have, from the perspective of some project partners, constrained the ability of delivery partners to plan resources over the longer term, realise cost efficiencies by recruiting for the longer term and, particularly in research, develop larger scale, higher impact activities²¹. It is noted however, that the use of the aforementioned multi-year frameworks (i.e. 3-5 year commitments) was a positive step during this CSP to alleviating these concerns.

5. Governance and Efficiency - Findings

Efficiency typically measures the extent to which an intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. At the time of the design of the evaluation, it was decided a qualitative approach to this question would be applied given the breadth of the evaluation and the data available. Consequently, the report first makes a general assessment of the overall governance arrangements between HQ and the mission including oversight of funds and key management processes applied.

²⁰ The number of projects supported by the Embassy decreased from 29 to 19 in the programme period.

²¹ Multiple partner interviews.

The section then addresses sub questions examining flexibility, management of risk and performance, and efficient resource management.

Summary of Key Findings

- There was evidence of effective management and oversight of funding and good decision making regarding the main strategic issues.
- Budgeting decisions were timely and informed by appropriate supporting analysis and reporting.
- There was close alignment between each of the Embassy's annual plans, the overall CSP, the business plan of DCAD and the Department's Statement of Strategy. Formal reporting was of good quality.

Key Finding 18: There was evidence of effective management and oversight of funding and good decision making regarding the main strategic issues.

Headquarters – Embassy governance arrangements

There was regular reporting between the mission and HQ and good knowledge of the detail of the programme on the part of the Desk. From consultations, the Desk was well informed and engaged, as were the policy leads. This was, in part, due to the consistent oversight and management by the Desk in corporate processes such as the annual planning process, management of risk, six-monthly and annual reporting as well as mid-term review and final evaluation exercises. There was however, some feedback on the considerable reporting burden placed on the Embassy that included performance, business planning and financial through to administrative and thematic requirements (e.g. gender, climate, nutrition and social protection, and OECD data). It was noted that the frequency and timing of such requests might be better streamlined where feasible. Overlapping and additional reporting requests that were outside of compliance obligations aforementioned, resulted in an unintended consequence, i.e. a reduction in time available for internal reflection and deliberation on reports at Embassy level. At mission level, the Head of Mission held weekly meetings with the full Embassy staff, and the programme team also met on a weekly basis. The management team, including the Head of Accounts and the Audit and Risk Advisor, met monthly to address broader Embassy issues, including the overall business plan and budgets. In turn, the finance and audit staff in the Embassy also received support from HQ and are in regular communication with the Evaluation and Audit Unit and Finance Unit.

Key Finding 19: Budgeting decisions were timely and informed by appropriate supporting analysis and reporting.

Stewardship of funds and decision-making

The CSP noted that flexibility in annual expenditure allocations across partners and budget profiles would be required. This was reflected in the Embassy's assessment of the challenging operational environment, partner capacities, prudent risk management and adaption responding to sudden shocks over the strategy period. The evaluation found that a feature of the 2016-2020 strategy was the

consistency between the proposed budget in the CSP and the subsequent annual allocations to the programme by the Inter Departmental Committee. This consistency provided predictability to the mission to effectively plan and manage its resources and may also have reflected HQ senior management's confidence in the Embassy's management.

The evaluation found evidence of strategic choices and timely decision-making were made. Examples include reprogramming of funds away from the Tilitonse project; reallocations of funds to scale up cash transfers in 2016-2017; reallocation of funding to the World Bank Agriculture Trust Fund in 2017 following progress in Farm Input Subsidy Programme reforms; and in 2019 a further reallocation to specifically support seasonal expansion of the Ministry of Gender's Social Cash Transfer Programme). A review of the supporting documentation demonstrated strong communication with HQ which facilitated context specific decision making and approval by the Senior Management Group in DCAD. Overall, an examination of the annual expenditure profile shows that while it occasionally went off schedule (primarily due to reporting delays from partners), budget execution rates were in line with planned spending. A review of the imprest requests and their timely management by the Desk also indicated efficient planning and communications between the mission and HQ in matters related to the direct competency of the DCAD and the mission. Finding 31 provides further information on budget execution.

In relation to audit, it is worth noting that during the period of the CSP the Embassy received clean audits in each year with relatively minor issues arising in the management letters for the audits of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. External audit coverage of partners was quite high with 98% coverage for 2017 and 54% coverage for 2018 of partner-related expenditure as of July 2020.

Key Finding 20: There was close alignment between each of the Embassy's annual plans, the overall CSP, the business plan of DCAD and the Department's Statement of Strategy. Formal reporting was of good quality.

Management tools and accountability between the Embassy and delivery partners

In terms of business planning, the evaluation team found close alignment between each of the Embassy's annual plans and that of the overall CSP, the business plan of DCAD and the Department's Statement of Strategy. Plans were developed on time and reflected adaptations during the strategy. Unsurprisingly, the team found greatest relevance with regard to the development programme, given the limited trade opportunities between Malawi and Ireland and the few Irish citizens either living in or visiting Malawi.

Reporting from the Embassy was through six-monthly and annual reports, political and financial reporting. A review of several annual and six-monthly reports demonstrated a clear alignment with the business plan, strong analysis and updates on progress. Reporting was of good quality. A mid-term review of the strategy was undertaken in September 2018. It concluded that the Country Strategy was well designed, remained highly relevant, and that overall performance was satisfactory at that point. Several actions were agreed for follow-up after the mid-term review.

5.1 Managing risk and performance

Summary of Key Findings

- Management of risk was integral to the way the Embassy team worked and reported to HQ.
- The introduction of the Standard Approach to Grant Management has added to the strength of oversight of partners with regard to proposal appraisal, M&E and risk management. However, improvements in documenting monitoring and having a consistent approach to reporting of risk are suggested.
- There are opportunities to improve the value of the PMF and partner M&E as a tool to inform management decision-making across all relevant pillars of the next mission strategy.

Key Finding 21: Management of risk was integral to the way the Embassy team worked and reported to HQ.

Risk management (HQ/Embassy)

Risk management was integral to the way the Embassy team worked and reported to HQ. The risk management framework was a central element of the CSP and formed part of the annual business planning cycle. Reporting against this framework to HQ also took place on a six-monthly basis. Movement and change in the risks, their weighting, and actions taken to mitigate them were clearly reported and justified.

While reporting to HQ was regular it was noteworthy that the high risks related to staff turnover and working conditions took some time to address. As noted elsewhere in the report, this had a significant impact on the Embassy's operations and workload, especially for its international staff. This risk has since been mitigated and has fallen to medium level, at least for the time being.

Key Finding 22: The introduction of the Standard Approach to Grant Management has added to the strength of oversight of partners with regards to proposal appraisal, M&E and risk management. However, improvements in documenting monitoring and having a consistent approach to reporting of risk are suggested.

Risk management (Embassy/Partners)

In examining this question, the evaluation considered the Embassy's approach to managing partners both before and after the introduction of the Standard Approach to Grant Management (SAGM), its business planning and monitoring systems. The evaluation has also taken note of its approach to the management of risk at the partner level. The Malawi mission volunteered to pilot the SAGM in 2017 and this had a significant impact on the standardisation of procedures and processes. The evaluation found that as a management tool it strengthened due diligence and systemised appraisal, M&E and risk management processes. It also contributed to the individual grant decision-making process being systematically documented. It was found that across the team there was a strong awareness of the political economy context, public financial management constraints, capacity constraints among partners and hence the elevated level of fiduciary risk at individual project level and at the macro level in Malawi. However, some weaknesses in the monitoring and risk management system were identified.

An examination of SAGM documentation in relation to risk was carried out for a sample of partners. This showed that while risks identified by the partners were generally captured in the project proposal and commented on in the relevant Appraise Recommend Approve (ARA) sections, there were limitations in how these risks were reported in partner project reports and reflected in the SAGM Partner Report Review sheet. The EAU Assessment of Internal Controls relating to Grant Monitoring Systems of the Embassy in March 2018 also found that the grant management risk-monitoring matrix could be better aligned with the SAGM. This finding could strengthen the grant monitoring processes overall and ensure that partner identified risks receive the necessary level of review and reporting. Qualitative evidence from interviews and other consultations showed that monitoring had taken place and actions had been followed up.

Key Finding 23: There are opportunities to improve the value of the PMF and partner M&E as a tool to inform management decision making across all relevant pillars of the next mission strategy.

Improving the Performance Management Framework and Partner M&E for performance management

The CSP Performance Management Framework provided a set of outcomes and intermediate outcomes, which gave a good sense of the overall direction and priorities of the development programme. Chapter 4 has afforded an assessment of the performance of the programme. Nevertheless, as a tool for management and evaluation the PMF had limitations, not least of which was the reality that at the time of the evaluation field work, up-to-date data for 24 out of 44 indicators was not available. The absence of this data was largely due to (i) the inclusion of global surveys that had not yet been released in 2019 and (ii) indicators that were drawn from national population surveys that are conducted at four- or five-year intervals, e.g. the Demographic and Health Survey and the Integrated Household Survey. The use of these types of indicators and the reliance on such sources made it technically difficult both to assess overall progress of the strategy when using the PMF and for the evaluation to identify the specific contribution of the Embassy's work.

While the PMF was slimmed down following the mid-term review,²² it still comprised a large number of output level indicators (relating to the 'Our Values' outcome area), with multiple additional sub-indicators, many of which could not easily be aggregated. Consequently, the evaluation encountered a challenge measuring results at project and PMF level. However, several areas for potential further development were identified and there is scope for HQ to provide better direction to the Embassy in the area of results definition and capture in the future. The PMF presented the most up to date data available.

Partner M&E capacity

While several partners had strong M&E frameworks, this was not found consistently across all partners. The evaluation found that:

- Seven out of 20 projects assessed met 80% or more of basic M&E good practice (for example, existence of an M&E plan at the outset, baseline assessment conducted, adequate budgeting for M&E), and can therefore be considered highly compliant;

²² Delays in fully implementing MTR recommendations on the PMF were acknowledged by the Embassy and mitigating circumstances flagged such as the need to maintain the legacy indicators from past programming.

- Ten met between 60% and 80% of requirements, and are thus considered moderately compliant;
- Three met less than 60% of requirements, and are thus considered weakly compliant.

This limited the ability of the Embassy both to learn and to make course corrections in terms of partner delivery. To a large extent, the Embassy relied on (i) six-monthly and/or annual reports by delivery partners for monitoring purposes and (ii) mid-term and final evaluations commissioned by fellow funders of jointly funded programmes. A number of other partners had not yet undertaken their evaluations, and while this finding is likely due to the timing of this CSP evaluation vis-à-vis the programming cycle of these partners, to ensure the Embassy has a strong evidence base it is important those assessments take place before the end of the strategy period. Embassy staff with responsibility for monitoring also confirmed there was a need to build capacity among partner projects to provide attributable monitoring and evaluation evidence.

Partner project funding

While noting some limitations in partner M&E frameworks, overall the evaluation noted improved project management processes associated with the SAGM and the absence of any major issues relating to project spend. However, one issue that was frequently raised by partners was uncertainty of funding. Though partners receive indicative multi-year spending plans (an enhancement introduced during this CSP), funding was only awarded annually. At least half of INGO/NGOs noted this inhibits recruitment and planning.²³

5.2 Efficient resource management

Summary of Key Findings

- Expenditure was consistent with approved budgets with low variance, and there was flexibility to adjust spending by outcome area.
- In theory, pooled funding arrangements offer advantages for efficient delivery of CSP goals but there was evidence from multiple stakeholders that pooled funding arrangements in general, and the ASWAp II programme in particular, had a number of features that could be further developed to improve efficiency in practice.
- The number of projects and/or thematic areas of support is relatively diverse in comparison to some other small development partners, but is also a reflection of the Embassy's focus on piloting and testing.
- Staff turnover was a challenge for efficient delivery of the CSP in the early period of the programme, and several steps have been taken to stabilise this. Management input on managing vacancies and recruitment constrained the time available for strategic management and overview of the programme.
- Opportunities exist to further define the scope of staff roles and responsibilities across all work areas and to ensure indicators for all outcome areas in the PMF.

²³ One project partner cited all these issues and commented that "it has really not worked well" and that a "better model is required", and that it had been "really difficult to cope with". The annual funding windows did not provide consistency over the three years of the project (in their case) and they felt the inconsistency had diminished the value of the projects. They contrasted the approach with that of a wide range of other development partners with whom they had worked, and who provided a more hands-off approach (less micro-managing) and longer funding periods. Discussion with another project indicated that the annual funding approach did pose issues for them (e.g. staffing and planning) and is likely to be increasingly difficult to work with as they move to projects which are of a longer-term nature.

Key Finding 24: Expenditure was consistent with approved budgets with low variance, and there was flexibility to adjust spending by outcome area.

Budget execution

It was possible to make comparisons for 2016, 2017, and 2018 based on the Embassy's audited accounts, as well as for 2019 based on approved expenditure. However, at the time of review the CSP was an ongoing programme so it was not possible to compare actual expenditure to planned expenditure for the entire period 2016-2020. The data available at the time indicated that the Embassy has delivered the CSP within budget with only minor variances. Actual expenditure was broadly in line with the CSP's approved budget over the four-year period. The programme has thus not been excessively front loaded which would have restricted the Embassy's ability to react to opportunities in the latter stages of the Strategy period.

Key Finding 25: In theory, pooled funding arrangements offer advantages for efficient delivery of CSP goals but there was evidence from multiple stakeholders that pooled funding arrangements in general, and the ASWAp II programme in particular, had a number of features that could be further developed to improve efficiency in practice.

Donor coordination and pooled funding

In terms of opportunities, a number of development partners pointed to the desirability of joint programming as part of a blend of funding arrangements, some with one donor, some joint funding, and some basket fund and offering good flexibility and alignment with individual project requirements (see also DAI Europe, 2016). The USAID also noted opportunities for delegated cooperation, as is currently in place with DfID.

Working alongside major development partners in pooling arrangements (for example, World Bank in ASWAp II - a major agriculture sector project across Malawi) has allowed the Embassy to leverage its budget by influencing larger budgets in priority areas at lower cost and pooling of risk. Project partners view this arrangement positively. The ASWAp II project uses a pooled funding mechanism to simplify delivery of a programme with multiple parts (for example, roads, training, agro-forestry) at national and local government levels. From the project perspective, pooled funding was beneficial and a particularly efficient way of working with multiple development partners.

Yet the approach is not without challenges. The detailed operation of existing mechanisms using this approach has come under criticism from several development partners, and it is not a solution in all instances. One lead donor criticised the pooled funding approach in general as being complex and difficult to deliver. They thought it unlikely to be a mechanism they would repeat in the future. Other donor members of the agriculture sector also criticised the pooled funding approach. They critiqued the lack of oversight and involvement by non-lead partners, a lack of profile for non-lead partners, and the overall performance of the programme relative to its potential.

Key Finding 26: The number of projects and/or thematic areas of support is relatively diverse in comparison to some other small development partners, but is also a reflection of the Embassy's focus on piloting and testing.

Economies of scale

As noted, the Embassy's management costs represent approximately 6% of total programmatic expenditure which, although low, is broadly in line with DfID in Malawi (DfID, 2018). However, it was difficult to make like-for-like comparisons as DfID's budget was c.£130m for 2020 (i.e. larger than the Embassy's budget by a factor of ten) and supported 26 active projects across six sectors in Malawi (Health, Education, Government and Civil Society, Disaster Relief, Agriculture, and Other). This compared to 19 projects across four broad sectors for the Embassy (Government and Civil Society, Agriculture, Social Protection, and Nutrition).

The number of projects supported by the Embassy has decreased from 29 to 19 in the current programme period. However, in the Embassy's case, given the central importance of innovation and piloting that runs through its programme, the relatively wide spread of projects may be justifiable. The key message is that the Embassy continues to communicate effectively with the Government of Malawi to ensure the latter is able to include the Embassy's projects within its planning and monitoring processes.

Key Finding 27: Staff turnover was a challenge for efficient delivery of the CSP in the early period of the programme, and several steps have been taken to stabilise this. Management input on managing vacancies and recruitment constrained the time available for strategic management and overview of the programme.

Staffing

Other challenges for efficient delivery included internal operating factors, including a high turnover of staff in the earlier phase of the CSP. These had an impact on efficiency in terms of pace of results at least, if not the quality and scale of activities. In particular, a considerable amount of management time and effort was spent managing staff turnover. This issue stabilised during the course of the CSP. During the earlier part of the evaluation period, staff turnover had an impact on strategic programming and results monitoring. These issues were noted in an internal audit report including their impact on the Embassy in terms of time spent on recruitment drives, training and dealing with challenges regarding carrying vacancies (Embassy of Ireland, 2018b). The conclusion is clear, namely that future delivery of the CSP needs to be closely matched and aligned with the HR strategy in terms of skills, capacity, training, recruitment and remuneration.

Key Finding 28: Opportunities exist to further define the scope of staff roles and responsibilities across all work areas and to ensure indicators for all outcome areas in the PMF.

Formalising roles and responsibilities across Embassy functions.

With 80 Irish nationals in Malawi and minimal export and import traffic with Ireland, Embassy activities and staff roles have focused more on the Our Values aspect of the CSP than in other missions. Until 2019, several Embassy functions including communications, trade promotion and fellowships were the responsibility of the Second Secretary position. There is now a six-strong cross-staff working group for

communications. It is noted that the communications roles are explicitly captured in job profiles, but that further definition of roles with respect to other aspects of the Embassy's work is required.

Opportunities were identified to further define the scope of all the outcome areas and to introduce indicators for core elements of these into the PMF, along with specific responsibilities across staff. For instance, the Embassy noted that a communications strategy was under development, but they were "not there yet". Formalisation of a communications plan would assist, along with setting out explicit objectives for other areas. In particular, there is scope to further define what the Embassy could, and should, be doing on trade promotion/private sector development, and in better aligning the governance programme work with the wider work of the Embassy's political functions.

Trade promotion is seen as an important pillar of the Embassy approach, but that work was undertaken on an ad hoc basis. It was noted that there was no EU Malawi Chamber of Commerce which would be the case in neighbouring countries. The challenging operational environment also limits the extent to which trade could be meaningfully promoted. Overall, there was some uncertainty around what the Embassy could or should do differently. There is a need for a flexible approach to trade promotion by the Embassy in a context like Malawi, but this has not been explicitly communicated by HQ resulting in a degree of uncertainty.

6. Gender equality and climate - Findings

This chapter discusses the Embassy's approach to the cross-cutting themes of gender and climate. It gives a brief overview of how well the Embassy and its partners responded to and promoted normative frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) and climate. It is important to underscore both areas were cross-cutting, rather than stand-alone focal policy areas, and have been evaluated as such. It notes several key achievements in these areas, as well as giving a summary of the feedback from the women's focus groups. Responding to the specific evaluation question, the final section identifies opportunities for advancing gender equality and fostering climate action in line with A Better World, which the Embassy may wish to take into account in future programming.

Summary of Key Findings

- The CSP was broadly aligned with international human rights standards as well as international and regional normative gender frameworks endorsed by the Malawian Government.
- The Embassy supported a range of achievements through astute partner selection and ensured gender and environment considerations were integrated throughout their programming. While gender targeting is clearly present, moving beyond this to transformative change, equality and genuine empowerment remains a challenge.
- Opportunities for advancing gender equality and transformational programming were identified in order to build upon the work the Embassy does in this area.

6.1 Gender

Key Finding 29: The CSP was broadly aligned with international human rights standards as well as international and regional normative gender frameworks endorsed by the Malawian government.

The CSP was broadly coherent with international human rights standards and international and regional normative frameworks endorsed by the Malawian government. This includes the ratification of a range²⁴ of normative gender architecture such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Southern Africa Development Community Declaration on Gender and Development. However, despite the positive signalling in national policies and subscription to international normative architecture, very serious challenges²⁵ remain in implementing transformation and reducing inequalities for women and girls in Malawi (UN Women 2018a), discussed later. The Embassy was active in national level advocacy and policy forums showing strong support in national level gender focused events. This included the integration of gender in the Ireland Africa Fellowship Programme and focal work on the Malawi Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence.

Key Finding 30: The Embassy supported a range of achievements through astute partner selection and ensuring gender and environment considerations were integrated throughout its programming. While targeting women is clearly present, moving beyond this to transformative change, equality and genuine empowerment remains a challenge.

The Embassy has integrated gender as a cross-cutting issue across its programming in agriculture, social protection, nutrition, and governance. The Embassy reported that partners were specifically selected for their attributes in relation to gender, a quality that partners were not always aware of. The inclusion of women and targeting was evident in social cash transfer, nutrition and agriculture interventions. The Embassy did not allocate a specific budget to gender as it was a cross cutting issue. Nevertheless, there were notable achievements, highlighted below:

- **Social Cash Transfers:** 70% of SCT households are headed by women (Ministry of Gender, 2018) with 73% of women's focus group participants female headed householders with responsibility for caring for children and grandchildren. SCT was a critical lifeline for food, clothing and education supplies.
- **Agriculture interventions successfully targeted women** with 112,500 women farmers benefitting from agricultural interventions, 44% of seed producers were women, 1,000 women farmers accessing markets and 3,000 women benefitting from diversified sustainable incomes.
- **Women's leadership and political participation:** The Embassy has contributed modest resources through UNDP to support women's political participation. Nationally, there was

²⁴ The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi contains provisions (A22, 23, 24, 27) that support the protection of women and freedom from exploitation. Further domestic laws include the Gender Equality Act 2013 and subsequently the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act and the Trafficking in Persons Act in 2015. The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2006 is supported by a National Plan of Action to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Malawi 2014-2020 implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (GRM 2014).

²⁵ For example, in an attempt to address *Chinzeke* (child and early marriage), the *Child Care, Justice, and Protection Act of 2010* was introduced to combat the high prevalence of child marriage. Yet, the median age of first marriage has made little progress since 1992, increasing marginally from 17.8 years to 18.2 years in 2016 (UNDP 2019). In the past three years, Malawi aligned the previously conflicting definitions of a child in the Malawi *Constitution with the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act*, which influenced the development of a National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages (2018-2023). In 2017, the legal age of marriage was amended to 18 in the constitution (UN Women 2020). The revised Gender Equality Policy (GRM 2015) acknowledges the gendered dimensions of many challenges that Malawi faces including climate degradation, human trafficking, GBV, HIV and a high prevalence of poverty. However, a deep schism is evident between legislation, policy and implementation.

marked success in women's participation in politics. In 2019, 43 women were elected to parliament, increasing representation from 16% in 2014 to 22%. Local elections had a very small gain with 15% women (compared to 13.4% in 2014).

- **The gender audit²⁶ noted examples of good practice** in Irish Aid funded programmes. Actions to mitigate the disparity in power and decision-making were built into programming with ICRISAT for nutrition and NASFAM. Understanding gendered experiences and challenging barriers through training and education was undertaken in the IRLI Access to Justice Programme and Dan Church Aid's support for female journalists in order to combat discrimination.

Women's focus group overview

The gender audit focused primarily on internal ways of working at the Embassy level as well as interviewing a small number of partners. Rather than repeating this work, the evaluation complemented the evidence base through a broader range of interviews and importantly, conducting women only focus group discussions with community members. Site visits to communities and women only focus groups with 273 women provided valuable insight into their perceptions, experiences and needs, as described by the women themselves. The focus group results found evidence of strong targeting, but also indications of within-household multi-dimensional poverty, food insecurity and gender inequality. Across all focus groups, women reported their greatest community needs and priorities were access to health, education, water and food. Fewer than 16% of 273 women had completed primary school and 4.5% had completed high school. Women spent an average of 1.5 hours per day fetching water and arose between 03:00 and 06:00 to start their chores. Consistent with 90% of Malawi's population, no women had access to electricity in their households, with the exception of one woman who purchased a solar panel on her roof as a result of another donor's programme. Solar lamps were highly valued and used by 94.3% of households.

Village savings and loans schemes were perceived as very valuable, as were microenterprise support and access to markets. Notably, 5,664 village savings group members (1,221 men, 4,443 women) accumulated €200,000 in savings (Embassy of Ireland, 2019). However, when it came to financial power, 80.7 % of women from the focus groups with husbands did not have any financial decision making power, even with income from "piecemeal" they earned themselves. Despite efforts in programming, women interviewed in focus groups reported they needed their husband's permission to receive health checks, visit the clinic and spend money on their health. When asked about burden sharing, access to resources, decision-making and gender equality, the power disparities were evident.

“Gender equality is a far-fetched dream. It won't happen here”.

Women's focus group participant, 2019

²⁶ C12 Consultants 2019

Key Finding 31: Opportunities²⁷ for advancing gender equality and transformational programming were identified in order to build upon the work the Embassy does in this area.

The Embassy could take the opportunity presented by the new mission strategy and *A Better World* to embed gender equality and women's empowerment more centrally within its operations and programming with a focus on transformational programming. Despite the constraining environment and persistent structural barriers to gender equality, there are significant opportunities the Embassy might consider in line with *A Better World* (Gol 2019a) and *Ireland's Women Peace and Security National Action Plan III* (Gol 2019b). The challenge is where and how to focus its attention in order to influence transformational programming. Broadly, initiatives and approaches could be strengthened to ensure inclusivity and participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions and prioritise efforts to expand women's and girls' choices and capabilities. In addition to enhancing gender equality throughout all current programming, the Embassy could consider investing in pilots, research or pooled funding on one or more gender focal areas: women's financial empowerment²⁸, education, political participation, GBV²⁹, sexual health and reproductive rights, WPS, challenging harmful traditional practices³⁰, ending child marriage³¹, and women's and girl's leadership. This might be done via increased engagement with, and funding for women's organisations and movements as well as building on current initiatives.

Education has multiplier effects: While education is a priority area in *A Better World*, the Embassy is not in a position to "do everything" and stretch itself too thinly. However, a very significant gap exists in GEWE programming in the area of education that is fundamental to the empowerment of women and girls. Every additional year of post-primary education for girls has multiplier effects, such as improving women's employment outcomes, lowering the prevalence of early marriage and improving their health and well-being and that of their families. Regardless of how the Embassy chooses to invest in selected priority areas, consideration of how the new mission strategy positions itself in relation to a coherent approach to GEWE programming in the Malawian context and Ireland's policy priorities needs articulation and consideration.

Implementation considerations

The OECD (2020) development cooperation Peer Review of Ireland underscored that delivering upon *A Better World* requires investment in resources, finances, people, processes, systems and knowledge management systems to facilitate the implementation of an ambitious strategy. Given Malawi's diverse cultures, complex matrilineal and patrilineal systems and difficult operating environment, consideration of additional expert capacity in gender at a senior advisor level or accessing ongoing contextually relevant technical support on a draw down basis, are options worthy of exploration. Key implementation considerations at the mission level might include:

²⁷ This finding responds directly to the evaluation question: How could the embassy and its partners work further towards challenging norms and practices in order to decrease gender inequality?

²⁸ Women's financial inclusion has made significant progress in recent years, however financial empowerment is an area of significant potential growth. The number of women having an account at a financial institution or with a mobile money-service provider has risen from 16.9% in 2011 to 29.8% in 2017 (UNDP 2019).

²⁹ Malawian women experience disproportionately high rates of violence and exposure to harmful practices (UN Women 2018a). An estimated 34% of all women reported experience of violence since the age of 15, with a lifetime prevalence of spousal violence at 42%.

³⁰ In a recent social norms and perceptions study, researchers found norms around harmful traditional practices and violence against women and girls in Malawi are prevalent (UN Women 2018a). While FGM is not a major issue as in other countries in the region, labia pulling and stretching is common. Other ritual practices such as early marriage, wife swapping, inheritance of a woman in lieu of a debt, *Fisi* and 'removing dust' are among many practices that can put women and girls at risk.

³¹ The median age of first marriage has made little progress since 1992, increasing marginally from 17.8 years to 18.2 years in 2016 (UNDP 2019). In the past three years, Malawi aligned the previously conflicting definitions of a child in the Malawi *Constitution with the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act*, which influenced the development of a National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages (2018-2023).

- **Continue with Ireland's principled approach:** Advocacy, policy influence and public diplomacy are low cost high-gain areas where the Embassy might continue building on its strong record and principled approach to supporting initiatives on gender equality in partnership with the EU and like-minded donors. Influencing activities should have clear and measurable objectives.
- The next mission strategy should increasingly seek to support transformative approaches to GEWE that seek to address the structural barriers and social norms that underpin gender discrimination and impede progress in Malawi.
- **An overarching theory of change** at the mission level, with clear objectives and aggregate indicators will assist in tracking progress. MFA Finland, 2020³² and UN Women's 2018³³ policy approaches, for example, might be useful resources.
- **Gender-responsive** financing should include ring fenced budgeting that is clearly linked to meaningful gender initiatives in the next mission strategy.
- **Consultation:** Interventions have a greater chance of success when recipients are consulted and participate in developing their own agency. It is essential that women and girls are consulted and included in the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions. Beyond Consultation (2019) has a useful toolkit³⁴ on this.
- **Gender analysis:** The Embassy should consider embedding contextualised gender analysis in advance of all programming and project implementation that takes into account intersectionality (Bessel 2015) as well as women's, girls', men's and boy's different needs. The analysis may for instance, take into account feasibility, targeting strategies, *prima non male* considerations (do no harm), localised indicators that feed into an overarching framework, regional variations and the structural barriers experienced by Malawian women and girls. Approaches to transforming gender relations should consider working with boys and men as co-architects of gender equality.
- **Knowledge management systems:** Professional knowledge management systems (e.g. end-to-end grants management that captures reports/progress/indicators) that are nimble, useful, effective and informed by best practice (UN Women 2018) are essential for efficiently monitoring progress and using data driven insights to inform management decisions.
- **Guidelines:** In the absence of an updated HQ gender equality policy, a localised guideline might be considered. Gender equality actions could be more explicit in all documents and processes and ensure checks that partners are implementing as planned (rather than having the guidelines but not implementing them, as found in a site visit).
- **M&E mechanisms** (discussed in section 5.1) should systematise the collection, analysis and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability as well as markers of progress towards outcomes that could, for example, be coherent with SDG markers (UN Women 2018).
- **Knowledge exchange, training and development:** The Embassy actively participates in knowledge exchange platforms such as Gendernet, and this approach should be continued. Ongoing training and development needs in relation to GEWE should be supported for all staff,

³² <https://bit.ly/3dNJsoN>

³³ <https://bit.ly/2YP2qar>

³⁴ <https://bit.ly/3dPxknq>

in particular local staff who contribute so strongly to organisational knowledge and local expertise.

- **Budget:** Best practice for GEWE is a standalone budget line in addition to cross-sectional work to ensure gender equality is prioritised seriously. This might be considered once the Embassy has had sufficient lead-in time to research and implement contextually relevant interventions and support.

6.2 Climate action

Summary of Key Findings

- The CSP's cross cutting issue of environment and climate was relevant and responsive to Malawi's needs and policy priorities.

Key Finding 32: The CSP's cross cutting issue of environment and climate was relevant and responsive to Malawi's needs and policy priorities.

The CSP was relevant to and coherent with international frameworks and Malawian domestic policies relating to climate action. This includes the *National Climate Change Management Policy* (Government of Malawi, 2016), which is used as a guide for integrating climate change in development planning, as well as *The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III* (Government of Malawi, 2017) and the *National Resilience Strategy* (Government of Malawi, 2018). Natural resources underpin the economy, productive sectors and livelihoods. Renewable capital is estimated at 43% of Malawi's wealth (World Bank, 2019). However, resources such as the forestry sector are strained with an estimated 98% of the population using biomass. In 1990 41.3% of Malawi was covered in forest, supporting diverse ecosystems and habitats. Population growth, agricultural encroachment and biomass usage has reduced this to 33.2% in 2016. The water sector faces adaptation challenges in policy alignment, affordable water harvesting technology, integrated water resources management and the promotion of integrated agriculture. Lake Malawi and its estuaries provide 60% of the nation's protein intake; however, population growth and overfishing are placing an unsustainable strain on viable stocks. Recent climate shocks include flooding in the Southern Region in 2015, which resulted in the destruction of 4% of Malawi's arable land, and the El-Niño-induced drought of 2016, which left 40% of the population food insecure. Climate change and the environment were integrated as a cross-cutting issue throughout programming, with several synergies evident (for example gender, agriculture and nutrition), reflecting that adaptive capacity is a broad concept with economic, social and environmental dimensions. Highlights of climate action responsiveness include:

- **The promotion of climate-smart agriculture to adapt to Malawi's climate challenges:** Climate-smart agriculture techniques can improve the productivity of smallholder farmers in the face of these stresses, as well as building future resilience to a changing climate. These are important interventions given the Malawian people's heavy reliance on agriculture as a primary source of income. One expert highlighted the strength of the Embassy's support for ICRISAT and CIP, and felt it could do even more to support legumes, which have a triple benefit of strengthening soil quality, providing nutrition, and as a cash crop (e.g. CIP RTC-Action, ICRISAT, NASFAM, and Save the Children).

- **Investing in, piloting and advocating for context-appropriate energy solutions resulted in the rollout of affordable fuel-efficient cook stoves and solar lights to ultra-poor households.** Malawi has vast human and natural resource capital. Conversely, deforestation is a major threat to the ecosystem, climate and livelihoods, and proportionately increases the risk of floods and degradation of soil quality. With an estimated 10% of the population with access to the electricity grid, energy poverty and its consequences are widely prevalent. The Embassy has made strong contributions by advocating for and supporting national initiatives through a number of partners. As part of the National Cook Stove initiative, 1.4m households were using improved cook stoves as of 2019, which is short of the 2.0m target by the end of the CSP. In 2019 alone, 22,153 fuel-efficient cook stoves and 5,993 solar lamps were distributed to social cash transfer communities and those affected by floods. Embassy support for the distribution of energy-efficient cooking stoves has benefitted the environment through reducing the amount of biomass used by households by approximately 60%. Other benefits include the reduction of smoke inhalation and time collecting wood.
- **Community-managed forests:** As with its work in agriculture, there was also a good alignment between the Embassy's support for energy-efficient solutions and its overarching objectives in the area of climate action, primarily through the impact on reduced deforestation as well as reforestation schemes. Approximately 770 acres of land was secured as designated community-managed forests and 905,786 trees were planted with a higher-than-average survival rate of 73.4% in 2019.

Key Finding 33: Opportunities for advancing climate action were identified in order to build upon the work the Embassy does in this area.

The *Rapid Overview of One World, One Future* recognised that progress with respect to climate action, had been uneven. It noted that staff and missions need practical support to operationalise the country's aspirations for climate action (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2018). The OECD (2020) recognised Ireland is accelerating efforts to mainstream climate action, especially at headquarters level notably by creating a Climate and Development Learning Platform, publishing annual Climate Action Reports for its partner countries, and providing multi-annual funding to select international climate change partners. More generally, the OECD (2020) noted that in common with other DAC members (OECD, 2019), Ireland pays limited attention to environmental issues beyond climate change and it risks doing so more in the future, as it further concentrates on tackling climate-related issues.

- Clustering climate resources at DFA headquarters through the Climate Unit may enable Ireland to seize emerging opportunities and innovative approaches. This could also benefit initiatives led by non-governmental organisations and public-private partnerships. There are opportunities to increase the demand for carbon credits in Malawi by engaging Irish corporates, as well as broader opportunities to explore climate finance and risk insurance to leverage additional funding into last mile resilience efforts. These are potential areas for future exploration by the Embassy, with the support of DFA colleagues.
- The Embassy may wish to consider engaging an environmental expert whose remit would include climate action or, at least, collaborating with missions in the region to jointly fund a position. Pending any such appointment, the Embassy may wish to commission an expert to review opportunities for further integrating climate action into the new mission strategy. This could include a focus on preparedness, which plays a key role in determining the eventual scale of the required response to major shocks.

- Given Malawi's vulnerability to climate shocks, there is no shortage of promising approaches the Embassy might consider strengthening in line with *A Better World* and Malawian policy priorities. These include the Malawian national policy priorities of promoting sustainable land management practices, improving wildlife conservation management, increasing irrigation at smallholder level, building capacity to climate sensitive diseases, promoting biomass briquettes to substitute firewood and charcoal, and disaster risk management. Rather than spreading itself too thinly, it could consider small, agile projects that link prosperity with climate, such as water catchment, green transition, affordable tech-based innovative solutions or future job growth sectors. The Climate Unit within DCAD, once established, might assist in supporting a balanced orientation for the Embassy moving forward.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

NAVIGATING A DIFFICULT CONTEXT

Overall, the Embassy made important contributions across a range of areas in a challenging operating context. The Embassy was politically astute, technically capable, flexible, and leveraged all aspects of the work of the mission to deliver a strategy that was relevant and responsive to the needs and development priorities of Malawi. The Embassy's proficient development programme and politically engaged Embassy-wide activities were cohesive and mutually reinforcing. The success of the delivery of the Embassy's overall strategy was tempered by the wider context. The nebulous fiduciary, institutional and regulatory environment is likely to remain challenging for development effectiveness, human rights, trade and investment.

RELATIONSHIPS AND COOPERATION

Reflective of the bilateral relationship, the CSP was endorsed by the Government of Malawi in 2016. The Embassy had strong, collaborative political and development cooperation relationships with the EU and peer ministries. It used its diplomatic leverage to engage effectively in key policy issues, defend fundamental rights and help promote gender equality, climate action and other international norms thus also furthering Ireland's reputation and global interests. The Embassy engaged effectively with Irish emigrants and the diaspora, as well as promoting Irish culture, arts and creative industries through Embassy events. Nevertheless, the evaluation identified opportunities for strengthening public diplomacy and visibility including further promotion of Ireland through digital forums in line with the development of its communications plan.

Recommendation 1: The Embassy should continue its strong cooperation and relationships approach that capitalises on its political, technical and public diplomacy strengths that reinforces all aspects of its work. The Embassy may wish to consider further growing its public diplomacy efforts, through digital fora supported by the implementation of its draft communications strategy/plan, innovative digital approaches, high quality digital imaging and contextually relevant content. This may dovetail with the continuation of meaningful engagement with Irish emigrants and the diaspora, as well as the promotion of Irish culture, arts and creative industries. (Owner: Embassy).

IMPLEMENTING AN AMBITIOUS STRATEGY

Innovation, research and effectiveness: The Embassy's approach to research, evidence and learning on a number of initiatives resulted in residual outcomes beyond the lifetime of the CSP. Building on longevity in the area, the Embassy's piloting, development and implementation of flexible, shock responsive electronic cash transfers resulted in improvements in efficiency of social support for poor and vulnerable households that informed policy and practice. It demonstrated improved systemic efficiencies that reached the most vulnerable rapidly during humanitarian crises such as flooding, drought and the annual lean season. Similarly, the Embassy's contribution to the UNDP's National Registration and Identification System was influential, achieving almost universal coverage of national ID cards. While some of the micro-research projects produced mixed results, it might capitalise on its comparative advantage and seek opportunities for localised innovative solutions by funding

approaches or research that are led by Malawian or regional academic thought leaders in partnership with Irish higher education institutions.

Recommendation 2: The Embassy should continue with its strong record of accomplishment and reputation for innovative pilots and transformative research that aims to have systemic influence at policy and/or programme delivery levels. It may wish to consider continuing to strengthen Irish-Malawian institutional research linkages and consolidate some of the more localised smaller research projects through this type of mechanism. (Owner: Embassy/Policy Unit-DCAD).

Development programming - delivering on Our Values: The Embassy built on the positive legacy of past strategies and in-country presence achieving important developmental outcomes throughout the course of the CSP. With modest resources, it reinforced good practice and accountability by funding interventions that strengthened the resilience of poor households to economic, social and environmental shocks in line with Malawi's growth and development strategy. The Embassy promoted the resilience of Malawi's people by working to improve sustainable livelihoods, develop climate smart seed systems, improve nutrition, access to justice, governance and participation in democratic institutions. Overall, the CSP was focused on strategically curated partnerships delivered through a range of modalities that targeted the poorest and most vulnerable households. Cross-sectoral synergies were evident between agriculture, nutrition, climate and governance. Several of the sectors in which the Embassy operates were highly politicised and the Embassy navigated challenges as well as possible within the constraints of the environment. It carefully managed the balance of the breadth of programming and associated risks that could undermine the developmental effectiveness of the Embassy by spreading itself too thinly. While some interventions achieved better success than others, the Embassy nevertheless made contributions beyond the financial grants alone. However, despite overall progress, the developmental needs of Malawians are significant and there remains a policy to implementation lag nationally to which the Embassy can continue to contribute.

Recommendation 3: The Embassy should continue its strategy of astute partner selection and mix of modalities and synergies across Embassy-supported interventions, such as agriculture and nutrition. It may wish to review governance programming and continue with opportunities that generate synergy across interventions in line with Malawian policy priorities. Acknowledging that the humanitarian sector was politicised and complex, it might continue with its work on reducing humanitarian need through strengthening prevention and preparedness, and improving coordination among relevant agencies where feasible to do so. (Owner: Embassy).

DEFINING AND MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Attribution and capturing results: There was a significant amount of valuable work carried out by the Embassy that added value to the entire strategy, reinforcing its development programming. However, although a difficult challenge, there would have been further demonstrable success if the Embassy could have better articulated this added value and incorporated associated results into measuring performance in such areas. Partner monitoring and evaluation outputs were of mixed quality and the facilitation of capacity building in this area, where the Embassy sees relevant, might be considered and monitored. While partner performance should still be collated and monitored, there may have been alternative ways of assessing overall mission performance that could be separate to partner performance. The post of M&E Advisor was reported to have added value in tracking partner performance and overall reporting. In order to implement and embed effective monitoring, evaluation

and learning and value for money, the Embassy might consider continuing the post of M&E specialist or availing of external expertise

Recommendation 4: The Embassy should continue monitoring and utilising a strengthened PMF and dedicated expertise that incorporates the breadth of its work and achievements. This could allow for pragmatic indicators and benchmarks appropriate to context and include all attributable aspects of its work and policy priorities such as gender and climate. It may also consider approaches to consider value for money and strengthen partner capacity where relevant on M&E. (Owner: Embassy/Business Support Unit- DCAD).

ALIGNING IRISH FOREIGN POLICY

Gender equality and women's empowerment: The CSP was broadly coherent with international human rights standards, and international and regional normative frameworks endorsed by the Malawian Government. The Embassy had strengths in advocacy and targeting across programming in line with gender as a cross-cutting priority in its CSP. Moving forward, the Embassy could take the opportunity presented by the new mission strategy and *A Better World* to research and embed gender equality and women's empowerment more centrally within its operations and work with a focus on transformational programming and a consultative partnership approach. Consideration should be given to strengthening areas it already works in or supporting research, testing and piloting interventions that may have positive uptake, such as women's financial empowerment, women and girl's leadership, eliminating gender based violence and child marriage or girl's education.

Recommendation 5: The Embassy might reflect on the implementation considerations outlined in section 6.1 and include these approaches as feasible. Moving forward, internal ways of working and interventions should promote gender responsive programming that directly advances gender equality and transformational change, whilst ensuring institutional capacity and access to such resources. (Owner: Embassy/DCAD Policy Unit).

Climate: Climate change and the environment were integrated as a cross cutting issue throughout programming, with several synergies evident. Its work on energy solutions for the poor, reforestation and mitigating deforestation are likely to pay dividends in the future. Given Malawi's vulnerability to climate shocks, there is no shortage of promising approaches the Embassy might consider strengthening or piloting to align with *A Better World* and Malawian policy priorities. Rather than spreading itself too thin, it could consider small, agile projects that link prosperity with climate, such as green transition or affordable tech based innovative solutions or job growth sectors. The Climate Unit within DCAD, once established, might assist in supporting a balanced orientation for the Embassy moving forward.

Recommendation 6: The Embassy should build on its current synergies in climate and consider approaches that will strengthen climate action as a policy priority. It might consider experts on a draw down basis to advise on elevating climate action in a feasible and contextually appropriate way. (Owner: Embassy, DCAD Climate Unit).

Prosperity: The Embassy supported people-to-people connections and institutional development that promoted mutual interests. It adopted a limited but realistic approach to developing trade and economic links between Ireland and Malawi. There may be some scope to extend this even further such as stronger promotion of international education, innovative economic engagement, corporate social

responsibility and deepening research linkages in the *Africa Strategy*, *A Better World* and *Irish Educated, Globally Connected*.

Recommendation 7: The Embassy may wish to articulate and consider more proactive but contextually relevant approaches to fostering economic development, mutual prosperity, people-to-people connections and international education in line with Irish foreign policy such as *Global Ireland*, the *Africa Strategy* and *Irish Educated, Globally Connected*. (Owner: Embassy/DCAD).

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGING RISK

Effective management, oversight of funding and good decision-making on key strategic issues was evident despite staffing constraints at times in both HQ and mission level. A combination of good management systems, communication, realistic objective setting and a sharp focus on the Standard Approach to Grant Management helped to mitigate risk. The Embassy's emphasis on off-budget programming as a funding modality was well placed although it was cognisant of the balance in shifting resources from off-budget to on-budget programming in order to support the Government of Malawi's ability to engage in comprehensive planning and financial management. The Embassy might continue with this approach if or when it can be ensured that adequate fiduciary safeguards are in place to work with Government systems more directly.

Recommendation 8: The Embassy should maintain a healthy risk appetite, continue to assess and calculate risk in such projects, and take the opportunity to make strategic contributions where appropriate. (Owner: Embassy).

RESOURCING

The Embassy is a large office and implementing the CSP calls for operational systems, management resources, and staffing levels that are commensurate with the ambition of the strategy. Though partner numbers have reduced over the course of the CSP, resources are stretched to the limit. Approaches, activities and resourcing at HQ level influenced the ability of the Embassy to implement its strategy effectively, such as turnover of HQ staff and high transaction costs associated with overlapping requests that might be streamlined. The new Mission Strategy should therefore be developed jointly with a review of HR and other needs. Professionally sourced knowledge management systems that are nimble, useful, effective and industry tested will vastly assist in efficiency and rapidly inform data driven programming.

Recommendation 9: The Embassy might review the relationship between its breadth of activity and balance its resources, including staffing structure, roles and competencies, operational needs extending to the physical space, office IT systems, and knowledge management systems. (Owner: Embassy/DCAD, HR).

In summary, the Embassy is well placed to continue adapting to the context, balance trade-offs, match its resources to outputs and orient itself towards a politically informed future. Taking on board the recommendations from this report and continuing its agile approach, the Embassy should be in a position to pivot towards *A Better World* and *Ireland's Strategy for Africa to 2025* (Gol, 2019) so long as it is sufficiently resourced at all times, supported by HQ and staffing gaps filled promptly.

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Appendix I: Stakeholders Consulted

Internal stakeholders

74 semi-structured interviews were conducted with approximately 234 individuals.

Department of Foreign Affairs	#
DCAD	1
DCAD Africa Unit	3
DCAD Business Support Unit	1
DCAD Civil Society Unit	1
DCAD Humanitarian Unit	1
DCAD Policy Unit	6
Embassy of Ireland, Malawi	18
Evaluation and Audit Unit	2
Strategy, Governance and Change Unit	1

External stakeholders

Organisation	#
ASWAP Implementation Team	16
Balaka Bank SCT	2
C12 Consultants	1
Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace	5
Chintheche Rural Hospital	10
CIAT	1
CIP	10
Community Journalist	1
Concern Worldwide	1
CSONA – MEDIA	1
Dan Church Aid	6
Dedza District Council	22
Dedza Social Accountability Committee	4
DfID Official	1
District Councillor	1
District Planning Directorate	2
Donor Nutrition Coordination Group	2
DRMO Zomba	8
Episcopal Conference of Malawi	1
GOAL	3
Heads of Cooperation	4
Heads of Mission	7
ICRISAT	2
Irish Rule of Law International	1
Kiltegan Fathers representative	1
LUANAR	2
Malawi Government Representatives	8

Organisation	#
NASFAM	6
NGO representatives	7
Nkhata Bay District Health officials	11
Nkhatabay District Council	7
Ntcheu Dept of Planning/Social Affairs Office	8
OXFAM	1
Save the Children, Malawi	8
Self Help Africa	1
Trinity College Dublin	2
Trócaire	1
UNDP	2
UNICEF	5
United Purpose	12
World Bank	3
World Food Programme	3

Focus group discussions

18 focus group discussions were held with approximately 500 community members (recipients of interventions) and key stakeholders (journalists and community action groups).

Community focus groups	#
CIP farmers	3
CIP Women Nutrition Group	12
Community Action Group, Mkukula Community Hall, FGD	9
Community Group of Chenyentha	2 FGS
Community journalists	4
Loti Moyo Model Village, Mzimba North	3FGs
NASFAM Model Village	65
Women's Focus Groups	272

Appendix II: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference: Malawi Country Strategy 2016 – 2020 Strategic Evaluation

Introduction

Ireland has been committed to effectively addressing poverty and inequality in Malawi since 2007. The Embassy of Ireland Malawi, has invested in results over the long term, noting that many of the positive results now emerging are attributable to the focus and sustained support of previous strategies and to investments in research and piloting undertaken since the embassy opened in 2007. From the outset this has stemmed from the rigorous analysis and technical expertise of embassy staff in the strategic identification of partners and the focal areas. Building on this presence, the first Malawi Country Strategy Paper (CSP)³⁵ was initiated (2010-2014). The embassy has overseen an expenditure³⁶ of €45.6 million between 2016-2018, investing in meaningful development initiatives in partnership with the Government of Malawi, multilateral organisations and diverse NGOs.

In the current strategy the embassy has focused on embedding “Our Values” from Ireland’s Foreign Policy, “The Global Island” and international development policy, “One World One Future” (Government of Ireland 2013; 2018) into its approach. The overall goal of its development work is to increase the resilience of poor households to economic, social and environmental shocks in line with Malawi’s Growth and Development Strategy III (Government of Malawi 2017). Ireland’s new policy for international development, *A Better World* (Government of Ireland 2019) has deepened its focus on four priority areas: prioritising gender equality; reducing humanitarian need; climate action and strengthening governance.

Malawi is an ethnically diverse, land-locked country with a complex environment for development cooperation. Boasting a rich cultural history and relatively peaceful transitions of government, it has been marred by the impacts of colonisation, inequality and poverty. Agriculture is a primary industry, with associated susceptibilities to climate shocks and natural disasters. Over half of the 17.6 million population is under 18 (Government of Malawi 2018). While progress has been achieved in some human development indicators such as life expectancy, challenges remain. These include: persisting inequalities, high levels of poverty, poor governance, population growth, high levels of financial risk³⁷, and an agricultural system that is highly vulnerable to shocks and an increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian support (World Bank 2019). Despite incremental human development gains, women and girls in Malawi remain strongly disadvantaged in areas such as health, education, livelihoods and human rights (UNDP 2018).

Table 1: Embassy of Ireland, Malawi budget and expenditure 2015-2018

³⁵ In the future, CSPs are being replaced with the term Mission Strategies

³⁶ Source: Embassy of Ireland, Malawi annual reports 2015-2018

³⁷ For example: poor financial governance, high debts and ineffective regulation

Year	Budget	Revised Budget	Expenditure
2016	€14,932,000	€14,932,000	€14,553,000
2017	€14,819,000	€15,250,000	€15,127,000
2018	€16,079,000	€16,079,000	€15,927,000
	€45,830,000	€46,261,000	€45,607,000

Major Components of the current CSP

The current CSP sets out Ireland's strategy for bilateral development assistance to Malawi over the period 2016 to 2020. It builds upon a successful 2010-2014 strategy. Prior to the first country strategy, an interim programme of support focused on food security and agricultural production was delivered from 2007 to 2009. The first Malawi country strategy (2010-2014) supported national and local initiatives across four thematic areas: food and nutrition security; social protection; building resilience and improved governance. These were enhanced by cross cutting issues of gender, HIV and AIDS, governance, human rights and the environment. The strategy (2010-2014) underwent an independent evaluation in 2015 that was assessed as appropriate and coherent with the Government of Malawi's policies and strategies.

Following a one year interim programme for 2015, the current strategy was approved in July 2016 for the period 2016 to 2020. The Malawi CSP 2016-2020 was designed to contribute to all five themes of Ireland's foreign policy "The Global Island". While having links to all five themes of this policy, the main focus of Ireland's engagement with Malawi is responding in particular to the need for a fairer, more sustainable and just world.

Malawi CSP 2016-2020 builds on the partnerships from 2007 and in CSP 2010-2014 along with the 2015 Interim programme. It is essential to note that the majority of the Embassy budget is targeted to goal three: to increase the resilience of poor households to economic, social and environmental shocks in line with Malawi's Growth and Development Strategy. The two high level and three intermediate outcomes that contribute to the key results are:

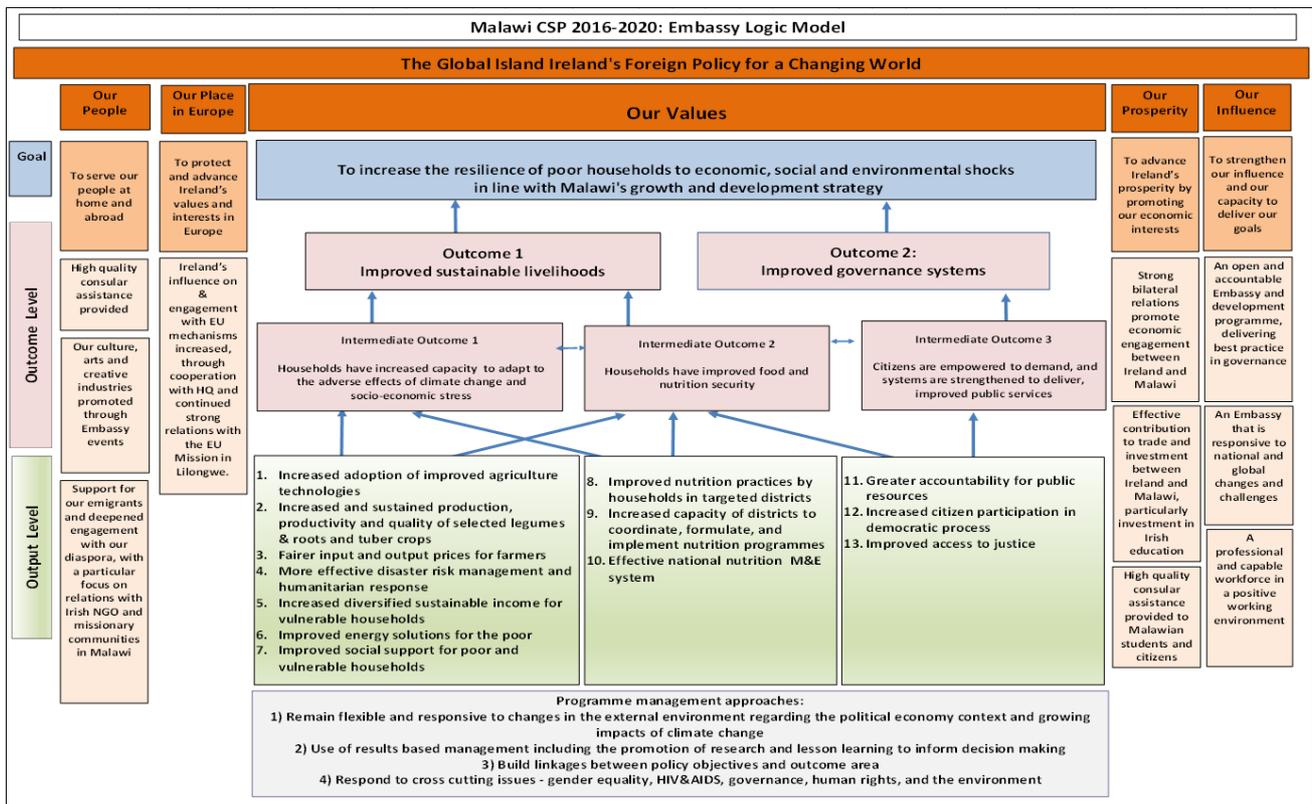
1. **Outcome one:** Improved sustainable livelihoods and;
 - i. Households have increased capacity to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change and socio-economic stress (intermediate outcome one);
 - ii. Households have improved food and nutrition security (intermediate outcome two).
2. **Outcome two:** Improved governance systems
 - i. Citizens are empowered to demand, and systems are strengthened to deliver improved public services (intermediate outcome three).

Key strategic priorities include: shifting from an annual humanitarian response towards a long term resilience approach; increasing agriculture and dietary diversity; enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment and promoting greater public accountability. These priorities are reflected across all levels of the mission's political engagement using a whole of embassy approach.

Programme management approaches include;

- Remaining flexible and responsive to change in the external environment regarding the political economy context and growing impacts of climate change;
- Use of results based management including the promotion of research and lesson learning to inform decision making;
- Building linkages between policy objectives and outcome area and;
- Responding to cross cutting issues – gender, HIV and AIDS, governance, human rights and the environment.

Image one: Malawi CSP 2016-2020 Logic Model



A new mission strategy

The Embassy of Ireland Malawi, in conjunction with the Development Cooperation and Africa Division (DCAD) and the wider Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) will start planning in 2020 for its new Mission Strategy due to commence in 2021. Since the implementation of Malawi CSP 2016-2020 began, there has been ongoing performance monitoring and analysis, including a Mid-Term Review (MTR). The MTR identified some notable achievements under the CSP, including:

- The expansion and innovation within the social cash transfer projects in the districts. The use of electronic payments helped eliminate the inefficiency of a separate cash based transfer during the lean season;
- A significant reduction in stunting and vitamin A deficiency;
- Exceeding targets for the area of land growing climate resilient crops and;

- Significant efficiencies achieved through the successful delivery of the national identification and electoral registration projects.

In advance of the planning for the new Mission Strategy 2021 onwards, a range of accountability and evaluative exercises will serve to inform the planning approach for the embassy. In light of the MTR, evaluations and ongoing reviews commissioned by the embassy, the in-country team have proposed that this evaluation be complementary and take a focused approach to this evaluation, rather than a broader scale evaluation. The evaluation will build on the findings of the ongoing reviews currently being undertaken by the Embassy of Ireland in Malawi to inform how the Embassy can better position its approach to transformative change in Malawi, in line with Ireland's priority commitments outlined in *A Better World*, Ireland's Policy for International Development.

The evaluation will address the effectiveness of the CSP across its five outcome areas, with focus on accountability and lesson learning in light of Ireland's new international development policy, *A Better World*. Gender and climate action/environment have been identified as cross cutting themes given past and future policy priorities. A representative sample of key/strategic projects and approaches across the outcome areas will inform the evaluation, with the view to provide a perspective of outcomes achieved. As such, this evaluation will focus on the aforementioned focal areas.

Purpose of the evaluation

The purposes of the evaluation as outlined in the terms of reference is:

- To provide DFA management with an independent, evidenced-based assessment of the performance of the embassy's CSP 2016-2020 under the criteria of effectiveness across its five outcome areas.
- To provide the embassy country team and relevant DCAD units with an evaluation that can be used to inform the upcoming planning exercise to develop a new Mission Strategy;
- To contribute to the pool of evidence for the delivery of mission results from 2016-2019³⁸ by applying evaluation as a mechanism of accountability.
- To contribute to whole of Department organisational learning.

The evaluation is timed to correspond with the completion of the current CSP and before the development of the new Mission Strategy.

Scope of the evaluation

Guided by the OECD-Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance and Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, the evaluation will examine the performance of the Malawi CSP 2016-2020. The DAC evaluation criteria of effectiveness has been selected for this evaluation. In addition, gender equality and climate action³⁹ will be embedded as cross cutting themes within the evaluation.

The evaluation will cover the period of the CSP from 2016 to date, acknowledging and incorporating findings from previous related exercises, aforementioned. While the evaluation cannot and should not assess the performance of the CSP against Ireland's new Foreign Policy on international development,

³⁸ The evaluation will cover the period up to September 2019.

³⁹ Climate action includes references to 'environment' in the CSP

A Better World (Government of Ireland 2019), it will be considered in the context of any forward-facing lessons and recommendations.

Evaluation questions

The following set of evaluation questions have been tailored within the framework of the evaluation criteria and are directly related to the purposes of the evaluation. Evaluation questions have been grouped under the criteria identified in the previous section and will be used to generate interview guidance sheets and evaluation templates. The evaluation will aim to answer the following questions⁴⁰:

Effectiveness

1. To what extent was the embassy effective in achieving results towards the outcomes of the CSPs strategic goals and the relevant key policies⁴¹?
 - a. What were the key factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of results?
 - b. Did the embassy adapt effectively to the changing context and was the approach the most effective under the circumstances?
 - c. To what extent did the embassy apply a political economy analysis during the implementation of the CSP and did this contribute to overall effectiveness?
2. Does the governance structure (at headquarters and mission level), enable the embassy to properly account for the funds allocated, make use of management tools⁴², allow for an adequate assessment of risks and facilitate effective and timely programme decision-making?
 - a. To the extent that the embassy was flexible and responsive to changes in context did it effectively manage risk and performance?
 - b. To what extent was the embassy and its partners able to efficiently⁴³ deliver intended results on time and within budget?
 - c. In respect of the above, what opportunities and challenges were identified for the efficient delivery of the CSP?

Cross cutting themes (gender and climate action)

3. What lessons have partners, donors and the embassy learned from programming and implementation⁴⁴ in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) and climate change in the Malawian context?
 - a. How well have the embassy and its partners incorporated, responded to and promoted normative frameworks⁴⁵ on GEWE and climate action in their CSP?
 - b. In respect to intended outcomes, to what extent was GEWE and climate action advanced as a result of the delivery of the embassy's CSP?
 - c. How could the embassy and its partners work further towards challenging norms and practices in order to decrease gender inequality and foster climate action?

⁴⁰ Note each question is not weighted equally

⁴¹ The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World; Statement of Strategy; Ireland's Policy for International Development; Operationalising pursuit of the humanitarian-development nexus; Ireland's National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security. Where policies have been updated, these will be considered in light of forward facing recommendations rather than reviewing the projects against policies that were not implemented during the CSP

⁴² For example: results-based management; grants management standards; promotion of research and lesson learning to inform decision making

⁴³ Note, the evaluation will take a broad qualitative emphasis (and where possible, quantitative where data is available) rather than the more quantitative DAC interpretation on efficiency where the criteria is usually examined through cost-effectiveness, cost-utility, value for money etc. For example, time and costs incurred will be qualitatively assessed.

⁴⁴ Implementation in this context refers to implementation science: the systematic integration of research findings and evidence into policy and practice

⁴⁵ For example, international frameworks on climate action; policies, human rights laws; gender analysis in programming, gender sensitive budgeting, disaggregated data

Lesson learning

4. What are key lessons⁴⁶ from the implementation of the CSP that can contribute to overall organizational learning for the embassy and the Department in general?
 - a. What unintended outcomes (positive or negative) were observed?
 - b. Taking contextual factors in to account, (budget, *A Better World* and the embassy's influence among others), what can the embassy and its partners pragmatically do better to contribute to transformation within the Malawian context?

Methodology and evaluation phases

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the embassy's CSP and make recommendations for lessons learned, a mixed-method approach will be applied. A representative sample of key/strategic projects⁴⁷ and approaches across the outcome areas will be assessed. In consultation with the reference group, Africa Unit and the embassy, it is anticipated that the evaluation will include but is not limited to the following approaches:

- Document review;
- Key informant interviews (in person, VC and skype);
- Focus groups with partners, embassy staff and communities⁴⁸;
- Workshop for the development of recommendations based on the draft report (Evaluation Reference Group and key DFA stakeholders);
- Financial analysis;
- Where appropriate, questionnaires with partners and embassy staff.

It is envisaged that the evaluation will consist of three broad phases:

Phase I Planning and review

The first phase will consist of a preliminary review of documentation - reports, reviews, evaluations and other documents related to the Malawi CSP 2016-2020. This phase would also involve initial interviews with some key informants from Irish Aid in Ireland. Refinement of the key evaluation questions, design of evaluation methodology and detailed planning for the field mission will be completed during this phase.

Phase II Documentary review and fieldwork

The second phase will involve a further review of documentation and a field visit to Malawi. The embassy will assist the evaluation team with logistics, including the setting up of interviews as requested. It is envisaged that the in-country field visit will be up to three weeks in duration. The visit will cross-check the evidence arising from the documentation review and the initial analyses (including financial analysis), and gather evidence from interviews with key stakeholders. An in-field debriefing with emerging findings will be given to key stakeholders prior to the departure of the evaluation team.

Phase III Reporting

The final phase will consist of a HQ debriefing and writing of the draft final report and any further dissemination. A draft report will be prepared by mid-January 2020 with a view to agreeing in partnership with the embassy, Africa Unit (reference group representatives) and HQ on a set of draft

⁴⁶ For example: strategies, approaches or potential opportunities

⁴⁷ For example: by modality; by outcome or pillar; and taking account of overall importance/relevance

⁴⁸ In order to approach appropriate discussion (including discussions on gender perspectives on GEWE) at least one women and girls-only focus group per community visited should be facilitated. Men and boys voices should also be captured in separate focus group fora (this includes blended groups).

recommendations. The final report will be prepared for submission to management by the end of February 2020.

Outputs

The expected outputs of the evaluation are as follows:

1. At the end of Phase I, a brief Inception Report that captures agreement on key issues and how they will be addressed during the second phase of the evaluation along with a refined work plan for the remainder of the exercise.
2. Initial briefing workshop post field visit with the embassy team on emerging findings.
3. A draft report (approximately 30-40 pages, excluding appendices) that sets out findings, conclusions and issues for management's consideration.
4. Consultation with the embassy and stakeholders to facilitate recommendations based on the draft report.
5. A final report (approximately 30-40 pages, excluding appendices) that sets out findings, conclusions, recommendations and issues for management's consideration. The report will focus on the core evaluation questions. Where recommendations are made in the report, management responses will be required. The primary audience for this report is the embassy team, Africa Unit, Irish Aid technical staff, DFA senior management and the citizens of Ireland and Malawi.

Timeframe

In order to maximise learning and utility for the planning of the next country strategy, a draft report is required to be completed in January 2020 and a final report by the end of February 2020. Phase 1 of the exercise will be complete by mid-October 2019 with Phase 2 to follow immediately thereafter. Tentatively, the field visit to Malawi will take place November 2019 for up to three weeks. Detailed timelines will be decided in consultation with the embassy and the international evaluation specialist(s) at the inception phase. Up to 80 consultancy days in total for the international consultant(s) is available.

Table 2: Key activities/milestones

Key activities	Date
Planning phase	May - October 2019
Document review and further planning	October 2019
Interview guide, pilot and implementation	October 2019
Key informant interviews	November 2019
Draft report	Mid-January 2020
Evaluation Reference Group feedback on draft report/sharing of recommendations	January 2020
Stakeholder consultation on the development of recommendations from the draft report	January 2020
Draft report with recommendations	February 2020
Final report	March 2020

The Evaluation Team

The Evaluation Team will comprise of two international evaluation specialists. One of whom will serve as the lead evaluator. Both the lead consultant and the second consultant will bring in the required technical and analyst skills as below. Up to three staff members of the Department of Foreign Affairs's Evaluation and Audit Unit, one of whom will have responsibility for managing the overall exercise, will make up the evaluation team.

In addition, for the purposes of the field visit, a local evaluation consultant will complement the core evaluation team and will serve to provide local knowledge, in particular, knowledge of the developmental context and Malawi's political economy. Overall, the local evaluation consultant will provide additional analytical capacity and technical expertise. This local consultant is not the subject of this tender. All consultants will report to the evaluation manager.

Management Arrangements

The evaluation will be project managed by an officer of the Evaluation and Audit Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs. A Reference Group, 'Evaluation Reference Group' (to include representatives from the Evaluation and Unit and Irish Aid HQ staff) will support the overall exercise. The embassy will assist with logistics for the field visit. Africa Unit, Irish Aid HQ and the embassy will provide all necessary briefing material related to the CSP in advance of the document review stage.

The Evaluation Specialists (consultants)

Proposals submitted will provide for two external international evaluators who will be available for the field based-work of this evaluation. Whereas the overall exercise will be managed by the EAU, the specialists will provide leadership in relation to the technical aspects of the exercise, including advising the design of the evaluation, closely monitoring progress in implementing the exercise, assuring independence, and directing any adjustments to the review plan as may be deemed necessary and/or appropriate. They will draft the final report following consultations with the other team members. The draft final report will be submitted to the EAU and released as a report of the Unit with due recognition of the role played by the specialists. CSP evaluation reports are usually published on the Irish Aid website. Up to 80 consultancy days is available for this evaluation.

Selection Criteria

Tenderers must demonstrate that they have the required technical, professional and skill base as outlined below. Tenderers who fail to demonstrate the following will not progress to evaluation under the Award Criteria.

- A minimum of an advanced university degree (Master's degree or above) in international development, business administration, economics, social science, international relations or closely related area.
- A minimum of ten years' experience in evaluation, development or business analysis at senior levels is required.
- Proven experience in the provision of programmatic and strategic planning or guidance is required.

- Proven experience monitoring political and development activities, and making recommendations related to international development is required.
- Tenderers must be of exceptional professional calibre, possessing discretion, cross cultural communication and political sensitivity.
- In addition to having strong evaluation skills, the international evaluation specialist must be able to provide evidence of experience and competency in all requirements in the ToR.
- Demonstrated knowledge of DFAs engagement in its key partner countries in Africa and particularly in Malawi would be an advantage.
- Demonstrated strong experience of evaluating complex donor country-level programmes and/or their component parts including experience of integrating GEWE and climate action in evaluation.
- Proven background in international development or economics with a demonstrated understanding of government structures, institutions and financing.
- Proven excellent English language writing skills.
- Proven political economy analytical skills.
- Demonstrated knowledge of GDPR, discretion and ethical conduct
- Excellent interpersonal, professional and management skills with the ability to both give and take guidance from the evaluation team and Evaluation Reference Group.

Assessment

Each team of two interested in this evaluation are invited to submit one proposal containing the below requirements. Proposals must adhere to the page limits specified:

- One page contextual summary of their understanding of the Malawian context;
- One page statement of the consultant(s) suitability to undertake the assignment;
- Two page statement of how the consultant(s) can deliver against this Terms of Reference and any particular challenges they foresee for the successful implementation of the evaluation;
- Two page summary of innovative methodologies/appropriate methodological approach the consultant foresees to apply to the evaluation.
- Two page Curriculum Vitae for each team member (four pages in total);
- One page list of publications for which the consultants were either the first author or lead evaluator (each with hyperlinks). Please include the specific role and contribution in relation to the listed evaluation, review or research;
- Should candidates be shortlisted, DFA reserve the right to contact the referees provided in the application.

Award Criteria

The Consultant will be selected according to the following criteria:

(Note: Assessors will be instructed to read only the number of pages requested and evaluate based on this limit. Also consultants must acquire a 50% minimum in each criteria to be shortlisted.)

Criteria	Scoring
Understanding of the Malawian context	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of the one page statement of their understanding of the Malawian context Quality of writing and political economy analytical skills Knowledge and skills relevant to DFAs engagement in its key partner countries in Africa and particularly in Malawi. 	
Understanding of the Terms of Reference and methodological approach	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of the two page statement of their understanding of this Terms of Reference and any particular challenges they foresee for the successful implementation of the evaluation Quality of the innovative methodologies/appropriate methodological approach the consultant foresees to apply to the evaluation 	
Experience of evaluating complex donor country level programmes and/or their component parts	10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated understanding of government structures, institutions and financing Quality of experience in evaluating complex donor country programmes/component parts Relevant publications as a first author/evaluator 	
Evidence of the individual having the desired overall degree of relevant depth of experience, interpersonal and management skills and relevant expertise to undertake the assignment	30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of education and background in international development, business administration, economics, social science, international relations or closely related area Quality of experience and expertise in evaluation and international development at senior levels including experience of integrating GEWE and climate action in evaluation Quality of experience managing and monitoring international development activities, and making recommendations related to evaluation and results based management Relevant publications as a first author/evaluator Overall strength of CV 	
Cost	30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily professional fee rate excluding VAT Blended daily professional fee rate excluding VAT 	
TOTAL	100%

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Annex I: Primary documentation

It is anticipated that the approach to data collection and analysis will primarily consist of a review of secondary data sources augmented with qualitative evidence gathered during the fieldwork. Initial documentary sources include (but are not limited to):

Government of Ireland

- Government of Ireland, 2019. *A Better World: Ireland's Policy for International Development* [Online]. Available: <https://bit.ly/1ajtVwH>
- Government of Ireland, 2018. *Global Ireland: Ireland's footprint to 2025* [Online]. Available: <https://bit.ly/2JYGcwl>
- Government of Ireland, 2013. *One World: Ireland's Policy for International Development* [Online]/ Available: <https://bit.ly/2Z5sZp2>
- Government of Ireland 2016. *Embassy of Ireland, Malawi Country Strategy Paper 2016-2020*.
- DFA Africa Strategy 2011
- Embassy documents
 - Mid Term Reviews
 - Annual reports
 - Financial reports
 - CSP
 - Associated evaluations, research and reviews

Grant Partner documents

- Partner reports and data
- Associated evaluations and research studies
- Donor reports

Government of Malawi

- Malawi's Growth and Development Strategy III 2017
- National demographic and health surveys

International

- Sustainable Development Goals
- UNDP reports
- UN Women reports
- WHO reports